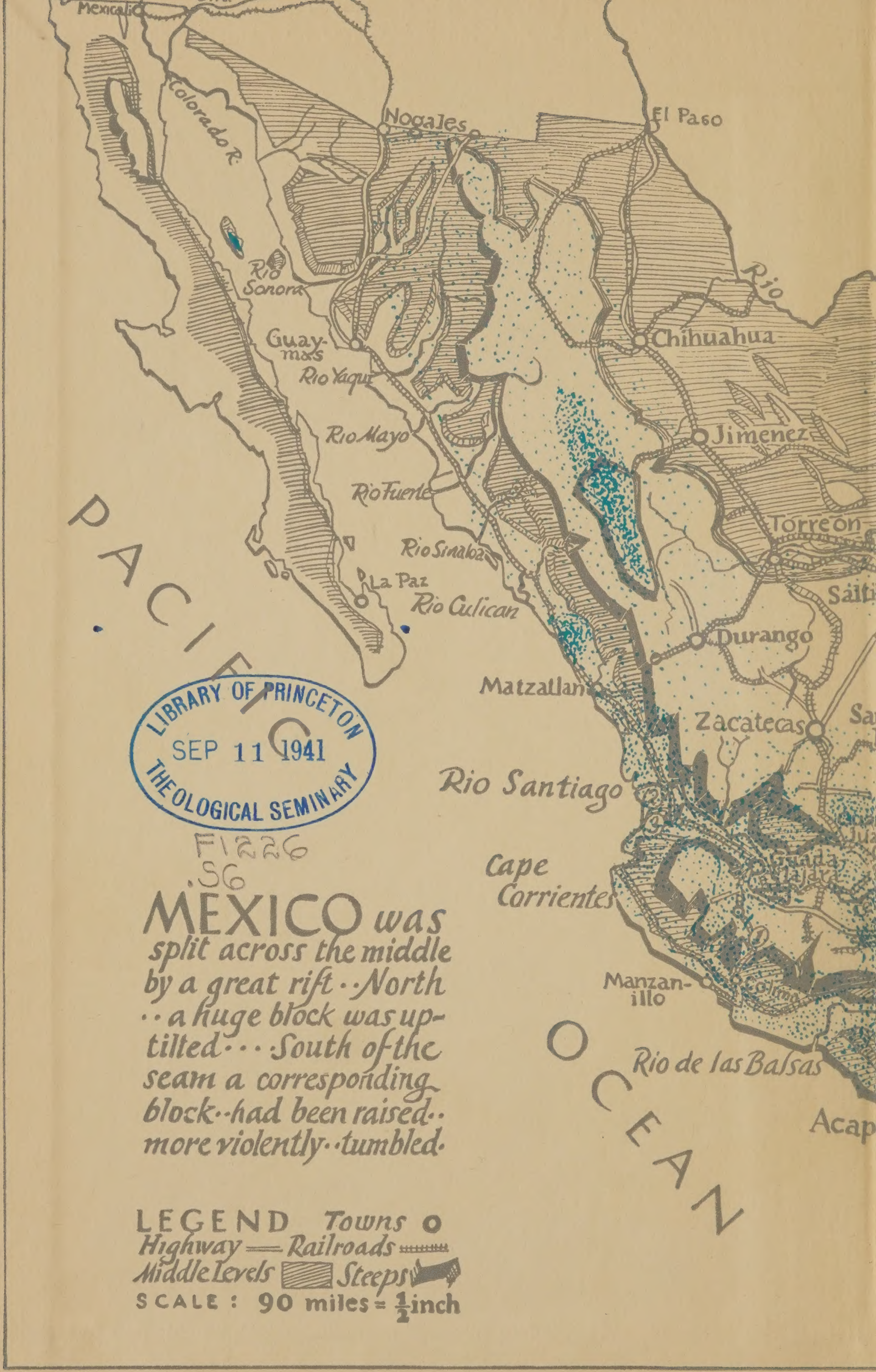
Mexicali
Colorado R.
Nogales
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Rio Culican
Rio
Chihuahua
Jimenez
Torreon
Salti
Durango
Matzallan
Zacatecas
Sa
Rio Santiago
Cape Corrientes
Guadalajara
Manzanillo
Colima
Rio de las Balsas
Acap
PACIFIC OCEAN
LEGEND Towns ○
Highway ═ Railroads
Middle Levels ▨ Steeps
SCALE: 90 miles = ½ inch

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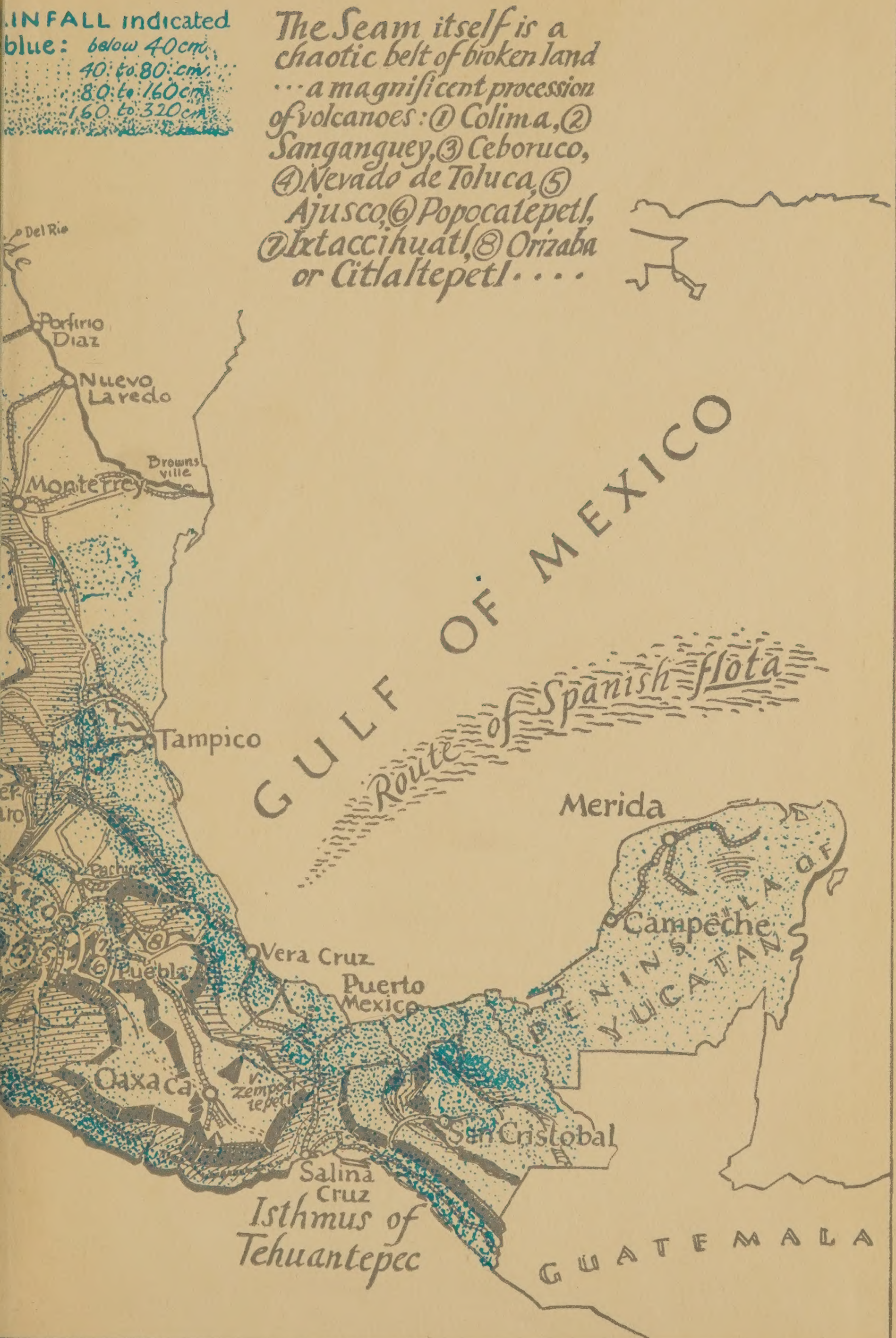
MEXICO *was split across the middle by a great rift . . North . . a huge block was uptilted . . . South of the seam a corresponding block . . had been raised . . more violently . . tumbled.*



INFALL indicated
blue: below 40cm
40 to 80 cm
80 to 160cm
160 to 320cm
Del Rio
Porfirio Diaz
Nuevo Laredo
Browns ville
Monterrey
Tampico
Pachuca
Puebla
Vera Cruz
Puerto Mexico
Oaxaca
V. Zempoaltepetl
Salina Cruz
Isthmus of Tehuantepec
San Cristobal
Merida
Campeche
PENINSULA OF YUCATAN
GULF OF MEXICO
Route of Spanish flota
GUATEMALA

The Seam itself is a chaotic belt of broken land ... a magnificent procession of volcanoes: ① Colima, ② Sanganguey, ③ Ceboruco, ④ Nevado de Toluca, ⑤ Ajusco, ⑥ Popocatepetl, ⑦ Ixtaccihuatl, ⑧ Orizaba or Citlaltepetl . . . .

MANY MEXICOS

Many Mexicos

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By LESLEY BYRD SIMPSON

1941

G·P·PUTNAM'S SONS·NEW YORK

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Grant me, Lord, a little light,
Be it no more than a glowworm giveth,
Which goeth about by night,
To guide me through this life,
This dream which lasteth but a day,
Wherein are many things on which to stumble,
And many things at which to laugh,
And others like unto a stony path,
Along which one goeth leaping.

(Prayer of an Aztec chieftain
upon his election.)

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BY WAY OF EXPLANATION

It is a fearsome thing to invade a field already served by such numbers of able commentators. What justification can there be for another book on Mexico? Wherein have other writers failed? What can I do that they have not done? These questions must be answered, or there is little sense in adding another volume to our groaning shelves.

By profession I am an historian. That is to say, I have been put through the mill of academic discipline, in which I was taught to weigh evidence and to accept nothing that was not supported by good and sufficient documentation—the more documentation the better history. And so for a dozen years I have been accumulating source materials in the history of Mexico, until I now find myself threatened with the dismal fate which overtook the scholar in Anatole France's *Penguin Island*. That gentleman, the reader will recall, met his death under an avalanche of his own reference cards. Also, in this business of accumulating evidence it is clear that, as one advances into the era of cheap paper and the printing press, available documentation increases in a geometric progression, and the labor of reading and arranging it becomes so arduous and time-consuming that the conscientious student eventually finds himself caught in an apparent contradiction: that is, the harder he works the farther behind the times he falls. His labors, therefore, seldom emerge from the sphere of the purely academic, to the great distress of Mr. Archibald MacLeish. Assuredly, something ought to be done about it.

The question is: what? It may be that the canons of historiography need revision. It may be that the historian of Mexico, for instance, could add to his usefulness by bringing to bear on the complexities of the little known present, analogies with the better known past. But by concerning himself with the present he will, perforce, have to do some violence to the canons of the quantitative method. We may have erred anyway in subjecting the writing of history too rigidly to such canons. It may even be that the art of the historian is more closely allied to that of the novelist than we care to admit. At any rate, to make his narrative include the present, the historian will have to rely considerably upon his own observation. He will listen to the gossip of the women in the marketplace and to the pronouncements of the sages in the barbershops; he will talk with the peasant at his plow and the shoemaker at his last. In a word, he will have to borrow the method of Herodotus.

* * *

There is little that is new in Mexico's problems. Most of them were recognized and faced centuries ago, and in their solution a whole scheme of society was evolved—an authoritarian society, in which the ruler ruled and the people obeyed, at least in theory, and everything was fixed in a rigid order which was meant to last until the Judgment Day. But that scheme of things was repudiated. To take its place a number of experiments have been tried, with no conspicuous success thus far. The result is that today the political structure of Mexico is an unstable mixture of ill-understood ingredients, the combinations of which are in a constant state of flux. Able economists and sociologists, well grounded in method and heavily fortified with statistics, have sampled the mixture and have drawn us pictures of Mexico—pictures which I find singularly unconvincing. The trouble, it seems to me, is that, although they recognize that Mexico is struggling under the weight of tradition, they fail to appreciate its momentum. They seem to think that a lamp can be rubbed or a formula invented, and that long centuries of accumulated habit will be shed like an old suit of clothes. Perhaps something of the kind can be done, but, before Mr. Chase's charming and self-sufficient state or Mr. Tannenbaum's agrarian paradise can become realities, a new set of missionaries will have to be found—men willing to suffer and die, and even give up automobiles and the pleasant life of the capital, to bring them about. And these new missionaries will have to know a great deal about their country.

This volume does not pretend to be a history of Mexico. There are histories a-plenty for the reader to consult. What I have attempted is a work of exposition and digestion. I have left out an incalculable number of facts: all military campaigns and the lives and miracles of most military heroes, for example. I have limited myself to a discussion of such institutions, of such habits of life and thought, and of the lives of such men as, in my opinion, have left the deepest impress on the country. The materials are arranged to throw these things into high relief. The method is admittedly subjective and my interpretations will be challenged, but my information is as straight as the sources will allow.

All those who write about human affairs must bear up under the charge of bias, and we might as well face the music from the start. For my part, from long study and familiarity I have come to believe that some features of the Spanish administration in Mexico were not altogether bad, and that belief has led me to take the part of an apologist at times.

There were great evils inherent in the Spanish scheme of things. Most of its weaknesses are well understood. Mercantilism, that is, the exploitation of possessions for the benefit of the mother country; the enforced tutelage of the colonial population, especially the white elements; and, above all, the assumption of a sort of divine infallibility on the part of rulers—all these things were common to the colonial empires which did their best to imitate Spain. The Spanish Empire, being the oldest and the most rigid, was the first to go under from the impact of modern industrialism and the solvent of the French Revolution. Its concentration of authority in a semi-divine king made it peculiarly brittle. Thus, when Napoleon the Hammer knocked the Spanish monarchy on the head the whole machine flew apart like Humpty Dumpty and could never be put together again. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of New Spain lasted for three hundred years—which is a very respectable life for any scheme of government—and I shall try to explain the reasons for it. It is just to give the devil his due. Indeed, I know of no better maxim for the historian to follow than the difficult one of Voltaire's Chinese philosopher: *Soyez juste! Soyez juste! Soyez juste!*

* * *

A word about terminology. Mexico before Independence was not, strictly speaking, a Spanish colony. It was a new creation, the Kingdom of New Spain, as Cortés proudly named it, and in time it covered the sizeable territory from Florida to California, and south to Central America. So I have used the term "New Spain" to designate the period of Spanish dominion, and "Mexico" or the "Republic" to refer to Mexico since Independence. The Spanish words which I have been obliged to use will be explained by the context.

Why *Many Mexicos?* The title is meant to suggest the complexity of that baffling country. For there *are* many Mexicos, in time, in space, in culture; in time, because Mexico is a living organism, and what it was yesterday it will never exactly be again; in space, because a whimsical nature has cut its soil into strange patterns; in culture, because its broken surface prevented the unity of the native race, and because the imposition of Spanish civilization has only imperfectly achieved a new unity—which is always coming into being, but never is.

* * *

No book, particularly this one, was ever exclusively the product of its author. Without the advice and help of many friends here and in Mexico, and without the abiding patience of a long generation of teachers, it would not even have been thought of. Leisure for study was made possible by the generosity of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the University of California. To all those good friends and institutions my debt is beyond repayment. *¡Dios se lo pague!*

MANY MEXICOS

Chapter I

MANY MEXICOS

ONCE UPON A TIME, in the immensely remote past—so long ago that only geologists and astronomers are interested in computing it—Mexico was split across the middle by a great rift in the earth's crust. That rift, or tectonic seam, extends from Cape Corrientes on the Pacific, eastward to the neighborhood of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. North of the seam a huge block was uptilted, called the Central Plateau of Mexico, which covers a third of the total area of the country. How high the block originally was, no one knows, but today its southern boundary reaches the altitude of some eight thousand feet, falling off somewhat toward the western end. From the line of the seam northward the Central Plateau slopes gently downward to an average elevation of four thousand feet at the border of the United States.

The seam itself is a chaotic belt of broken land a hundred miles wide and eight hundred miles long. Through it a magnificent procession of volcanoes pushed up: Colima, Sangangüey, and Ceboruco, at the Pacific end; the Nevado de Toluca (Tzimantécatl), Ajusco, Popocatépetl, Ixtaccíhuatl, and Malinche, on the plateau; and the incomparably beautiful Citlaltépetl ("Mountain of the Star"), or Orizaba, whose dazzling snow-capped cone rises over 18,000 feet and may be seen from a hundred miles out in the Gulf of Mexico. Scores of smaller volcanoes, which in less overpowering company would be worthy of mention, dot the area of the seam from one end to the other, while lakes and rivers and mountains of lava and volcanic ash make the region in many parts a sort of gigantic natural slag heap —called *mal país*, or bad country. *The effects of that upheaval were to determine* (a few million years in the future) *the conditions and habits of life of a great part of the Mexican people.*

South of the seam a corresponding block had been raised up, probably long before, more violently tilted than its northern counterpart, broken and split into a labyrinth of lesser blocks, and pitched and tumbled in all directions, forming several thousand square miles of the wildest country imaginable. Its planless mountains and deep depressions make such an effective barrier, in fact, that they quite literally cut Mexico in half. The timid little narrow gauge railway that twists and doubles its way between Mexico City and Oaxaca hardly does more than emphasize the thoroughness of that barrier, and even it gives up in despair before the formidable wilderness of the Sierra Madre del Sur.

The lower axis of the southern plateau is the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, beyond which the land rises again to the east into the rough limestone highlands of Chiapas. Toward the Gulf of Mexico this plateau of Chiapas drops off into the steaming coastal plain of Tabasco. The difficulty of the terrain is indicated by the total lack of land transportation between Mexico and Yucatan. The railroad which has long been planned to penetrate that region is locally referred to as *el ferrocarril del centenario*, because it will be running a hundred years hence. The peninsula of Yucatan itself is a huge sheet of rarely broken limestone, a paradise for archeologists, but one whose thin soil and unequal rainfall make it a very spotty paradise for the people who live there.

Along the edges of the great isolated land masses of Mexico, and everywhere within them, the earth's crust has been further creased and folded and ripped into ranges and clusters of mountains. From the border of Arizona southward the Sierra Madre Occidental, which is about a hundred miles wide on the average and twelve hundred miles long, cuts the Central Plateau off from the coastal plain of the Pacific. Southeast of the great seam the mountains continue for a thousand miles more as the Sierra Madre del Sur, which comes down to the water's edge and makes a large part of the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca a forbidding and unmapped waste. On the east side of Tehuantepec it rises again to form the three-hundred-mile southern escarpment of the Chiapas highlands.

On the eastern edge of the Central Plateau the same phenomenon is repeated. Beginning with the low brown hills of Nuevo León, just across the Río Grande, the Sierra Madre Oriental separates the highlands from the coastal plain for a thousand miles along the Gulf of Mexico, rising to a stupendous green wall nine thousand feet in height.

As if the mountain barriers and escarpments were not enough to discourage any notion of geographic unity in Mexico, nature further complicated the matter by slashing the plateau with immense gullies, called *barrancas*, cut by the heavy summer downpours. The canyon of the Santiago is one such barranca, bearing comparison with the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. This vast abyss runs from the vicinity of Guadalajara over two hundred miles across the states of Jalisco and Nayarit to the Pacific. Another is the four-hundred-mile gorge of the Moctezuma, which crosses the Central Plateau, through the states of Querétaro, Hidalgo, and Vera Cruz. The rivers which flow through the barrancas are feeble trickles during the dry season and raging brown torrents from June to November, useless for transport and too far below the surface of the land to be utilized for irrigation. In pre-Conquest times the barrancas were easily defended barriers and became the natural boundaries between the Indian nations, and today they are formidable obstacles for highways and railroads to overcome. *Almost every stream of any consequence in the*

Central Plateau of Mexico runs through a barranca, from hundreds to thousands of feet below the level of the surrounding country.

The tale is not yet told. An almost equally great hazard in the way of human circulation is presented by the extremes of climate in the different altitudes. A moment's reflection will make this clear. The mean temperature at any given place drops one degree Fahrenheit for every 300 feet in altitude. Thus Mexico City, at 7500 feet, is normally twenty-five degrees cooler than Vera Cruz, at sea level. That might not be so bad, but the humidity drops at a corresponding rate as the higher altitudes are reached, until the rapid evaporation on the plateau makes the *sensible* difference in temperature much greater than the thermometer indicates. The effect on living conditions should at once be apparent. In the hot coastal plains and in the depressions of the plateau the Indian wears few clothes or none at all, and his habitation is a flimsy affair of canes and thatch, through which the wind blows and the rains splash. The higher he climbs the more clothes he must wear and the sturdier must be his house, and lacking such protection—as he frequently does—he is more than likely to fall a victim to the respiratory diseases which are the scourge of the high country in winter. Also, in the lowlands his lungs are conditioned to the breathing of rich air, and he gets along on comparatively little of it. Transfer him to the highlands, however, and he must take in about twice as much air to get the same amount of oxygen, with a corresponding strain on his heart. Contrariwise, a highland Indian brought to the lowlands has more lung capacity than he needs, and the unused portion of his lungs makes an excellent breeding place for assorted deadly germs. The danger of bringing men from the low country to the high country, or vice versa, was so great that the Spanish government forbade it by stringent laws.

The natural barriers I have described would not necessarily make life difficult in the various isolated regions of Mexico if it were not for the fact that they determine to a large extent the amount of rainfall in a given locality. If you live on the windward side of the eastern escarpment, for instance, you will be drenched by a regular deluge for many months of the year. Move a few miles inland over the mountains, however, and you will spend a good part of your time praying for rain.

A second and equally important fact about the climate of Mexico is that the greater part of the country lies in the wide band between the path of the northern cyclonic storms (the prevailing westerlies) and the tropical rain belt. This band extends, roughly, from Lat. 32° to Lat. 18°. Rainfall in that area is extremely capricious, although, generally speaking, it is very light in the far north and very heavy in the far south. *Average* precipitation means very little there. Years may go by with hardly enough rain to water a pitiful crop of maize, followed by a succession of disastrous floods and such humidity that the grain sprouts in the ear. There is rarely any such thing as a "normal" season for the Mexican farmer.

He is further plagued in the high country by unpredictable frosts, which may kill his maize while it is sprouting, or kill it while the grain is still in the milk. Losses of fifty per cent of his crop are not uncommon, while once in a long time comes such a frightful catastrophe as the great freeze of August, 1784, which totally wiped out the maize and bean crop of the plateau, causing the death by starvation of an estimated 300,000 people.[1]

[1] I find it excessive that Ernest Gruening, in his usually thoughtful *Mexico and its Heritage,* should inferentially attribute the mortality of that famine to Spanish indifference. "A Spanish muleteer," he writes, "who became rich enough to lend the king a million pesos was created Conde de Regla; when his son was christened the whole party walked from his home to the church on ingots of silver. But in 1784 300,000 people perished in New Spain from famine and its consequences."

Rainfall is of such transcendental importance in the life of Mexico that we must once again follow the map around in order to understand it. Beginning with the extreme northwest we find the long tongue of Lower California spanning the belt of greatest aridity. Its northern tip, on the west coast, at least, comes in for a small share of the rain brought by the cyclonic storms of the Pacific, but the next 700 miles of it are a scorched and almost uninhabited desert, until its southern tip intrudes a little way into the tropical rain belt. Crossing over to the east side of the Gulf of California, we come to the Sonora Desert, which for 500 miles south of the border is one of the most fearfully arid wastes on the surface of the globe, where the temperature climbs to such heights as to make the desert impassable save in the few relatively cool months of winter. South of Guaymas the aspect of the coastal plain gradually changes as we enter the tropical rain belt, becoming greener and more habitable in Sinaloa, and finally going to the opposite extreme of turning into a dense jungle on the coast north of Cape Corrientes.

East of the Sonora Desert the wide expanse of the Sierra Madre Occidental catches a fair amount of rain, and its long narrow valleys make a pleasant enough habitat for mankind. Continuing eastward from the mountains of Sonora, we enter into the immense triangle of desert which reaches far down into the Central Plateau and covers a large part of the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, and Zacatecas. The desperately dry plains of this central desert offer poor support for the population, except where the waters of the Conchos River, the Nazas, and other streams have been

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This is one of the most astonishing non sequiturs I have ever come across. The fact of the matter is that in the unprecedented disaster the viceroy opened the public granaries, and officials and private citizens organized relief on an immense scale. The records of the great famine fill many hundreds of folios in the National Archives of Mexico, and are mostly concerned with relief measures.

diverted into great irrigation projects. Two hundred miles eastward across the desert we come to the beginning of the Sierra Madre Oriental and sufficient rainfall to make eastern Coahuila and Nuevo León the best farming country of the Republic. Dropping down into the Gulf state of Tamaulipas, however, we enter the hot and relatively sterile northern tip of the coastal plain of the Gulf of Mexico, which is a continuation of the topography of the southern end of Texas.

And so down to Tampico, where the great horseshoe of the Gulf coastal plain proper begins, appearing first as a narrow strip of land 500 miles long, lying under the shadow of the eastern escarpment of the Central Plateau and drenched by incredible quantities of water dropped by the wet winds of the Gulf. The precipitation increases as we go southward, until at the middle of the horseshoe, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, it reaches the staggering total of *ten feet a year*. The numerous torrents, swamps, and jungles resulting from the continual deluge make the long state of Vera Cruz one of the most difficult regions of Mexico to traverse, and at its southern end the heavy runoff turns the country into a network of great rivers and its people into a race of boatmen. Rain, which is precious beyond all things on the plateau, is here one of man's worst enemies, because it leaches plant food out of the soil faster than it can be replaced, and the result is that great areas are little better than soggy green deserts, where a few sorry-looking villages somehow eke out a precarious living.

These same winds beat against the northern escarpment of the Chiapas highlands, and the heavy precipitation makes the depression between Chiapas and Yucatan an all but impenetrable jungle. The north winds lose some of their fierceness as they pass over the highlands and make that region one of the best-watered and pleasantest in Mexico. When they blow over the southern escarpment, however, they change their character again and howl across the

Pacific coastal plain in a fury of heat, dust, and flies in the dry season, which are only a shade less unbearable than the heat, mud, and mosquitoes of the wet season. The discomfort and danger of this endless gale have provoked sour comment from travelers for four hundred years.

In our hasty trip around the rim of the Republic we have purposely neglected the more important half of it lying in the two sections of the plateau north and south of the great seam—all the territory, roughly speaking, between Lat. 22° and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, except the coastal plains. Three-fourths of the total population of Mexico live in this area. It is the essence, the very heart and kernel, of Mexico, enjoying more or less similar living conditions, given the differences of altitude. The reason, of course, lies in the rainfall, which, although capricious and unreliable, can usually be counted on to water the maize during the crucial early weeks of its growing period.

* * *

This rough sketch of the topography and climate of Mexico is admittedly only an approximation, since any generalization about them is very apt to break down locally. Accidents of the terrain play unexpected tricks upon lovers of order in nature. A cool and well-watered little valley nestles among the hot mountains of Lower California, or an unaccountable desert suddenly appears in the heart of the tropical rain belt, where it has no right to be, as on the northern tip of the peninsula of Yucatan. It should begin to be apparent to the reader, however, why there are many Mexicos—why, for example, there are some fifty distinct language groups among the Indians, and why the Maya of Yucatan are total foreigners to the Yaqui of Sonora.

Chapter II

THE TYRANT

From remote antiquity the Indians of all parts of Mexico have had a common heritage; that is, wherever maize will grow—and it will grow everywhere save in the out-and-out deserts and in the water-logged places I have described—their staff of life is the tortilla, that flat, leathery, not unpleasant thin cake which is the Mexican's bread, as well as the simple instrument for conveying to his mouth such dripping and delectable messes as bean soup, fried beans, and *guacamole*. The dry maize is prepared by soaking it overnight in a solution of lime or wood-ashes, which removes the tough skin. It is then ground into a wet meal (*masa*) on that curious three-legged washboard contraption known as a *metate*. The masa may be mixed with water and drunk as *atole*, but its principal use is in the making of tortillas. From one end of Mexico to the other the grinding of the masa and the patting of tortillas is the morning song of life. It has been going on for such countless generations, and it is so thoroughly a part of immutable *costumbre*, that I suspect that the vendors of labor-saving gadgets and those kindly people who would emancipate the Indian woman from her ancient drudgery will not soon disturb the rhythm of the tortilla-makers.

This all-pervading heritage goes back to that distant day when the wandering seed-gatherers of the highlands of Central America found a luscious grass, with edible seeds growing in a single small ear. No one has any idea how long ago it was, nor do we know how long the gatherers were content to hunt the wild seeds, until one day the accidental sprouting of a lost kernel or two gave some forgotten scientist the idea of planting them. From that moment dates the civilization of the western hemisphere. The Inca, the Maya, the Zapotec, the Mixtec, the Tarascan, the Aztec, all the numerous cultures of pre-white Middle America, in short, owed their existence to the discovery of maize. *That discovery was one of the most important achievements of mankind anywhere.*

Maize, like wheat, rice, and other food plants, was not merely a discovery; it was an invention. The principle of selection had to be thought of before any progress could be made toward the heavy producers we know today, but, once that principle had been established, the long evolution from the wild grass of Guatemala to the stupendous cornstalks of Iowa was assured. Those early-American scientists, by careful selection, got the wild maize to yield more and more seeds, until it gave a great many more than were needed for reproduction. They also learned that the seeds would keep indefinitely if guarded from moisture, and they stored them in dry places against the lean months. They brought the seed to the hot country of the coast and to the arid country of the plateau, and made it grow where wild maize had never been. Maize began to take on a certain esoteric or miraculous quality in their minds and became in time the center of the tribal religion. It was the holy grain, the *teocentli* of the Aztecs. Its planting and harvest became the greatest religious festivals of the year, for it was the bread of life, *and it still is.*

The intelligent people of Middle America discovered and invented many other valuable things. They took the small bitter seeds of a species of lupine and from them developed the infinite varieties of beans that we know. A small wild squash under their patient hands became the pumpkin. A morning glory with a thick root was metamorphosed into our sweet potato. The "Irish" potato, tobacco, "Sea Island" cotton and the ordinary "Egyptian" cotton of the South, an infinity of useful herbs, the fiber of the maguey and henequen, cochineal, a native indigo and Tyrean purple, and the techniques of cultivation and manufacture of all these things, were Indian discoveries and inventions. Perhaps, if they had not been disturbed, the Indians might have got round to inventing money, interest, time payments, and gunpowder.

Their discoveries, however, exacted a price. Their useful inventions became necessities. They learned to depend on maize for their food supply. With the abundant yield of the new grain a larger population could be supported, and, after it had come into existence, it *had* to be supported. The Indians became the slaves of their own invention. Maize imposed a severe discipline upon her devotees. Land had to be cleared and prepared for cultivation at one fixed season of the year; the grain had to be planted at another, harvested at another. Rain had to be prayed for and priests and gods propitiated. One break in the eternal round and a community would be faced with starvation. No more moving about as in the old free days of hunting and seed-gathering. Surplus food meant that the Indians could now afford the luxury of parasite classes. Warriors and priests; artists, poets, and scientists; craftsmen, architects, and engineers, lived two thousand years ago in the cities of Yucatan. The discipline of maize spread north and south, to the distant valleys of the Andes and to the villages of the Iroquois. In time it might have reduced the people of the whole hemisphere to civilized immobility. And then the crowning irony of maize: when the Spaniards came, to their amazement and delight they found a numerous agrarian population, long accustomed to the sober responsibility of raising food and not unwilling to exchange one parasite class for another.

Maize would brook no competitors. It made Mexico a one-crop country. The reasons are clear. It is the one grain which flourishes under the peculiar climatic conditions of the plateau and the lowlands of Mexico. The seasonal humidity (June to September) coincides with its growing period. *It does not require irrigation.* The weight of this last argument should be appreciated after what I have said of the nature of the terrain. The thoroughness of the tyranny of maize is best illustrated by a few figures. In 1930 over two million metric tons (roughly, 60,000,000 bushels) of maize were produced in Mexico. The next two ranking grain crops, wheat and rice, totalled 365,000 tons, while beans yielded 87,000 tons. In other words, *the production of maize was over four times as great as that of the three other major food crops put together.*

Maize is still the holy grain of Mexico. If the ancient gods of rain and fertility have been baptized and made over into Christian saints and virgins, their functions have not materially changed. The local *santo* is still paraded through the village at planting time, and is vigorously scolded when the rains fail to come. The growing of maize can never be wholly a business for the peasant of Mexico. *It is a way of life.*

Maize exacts another and more insidious tribute of her slaves. It is one of the most soil-exhausting of crops. A plot (*milpa*), unless fertilized—and the use of fertilizers is rare among the Indians—is good for two or three seasons, after which it is abandoned for several years. The preparation of a new milpa is a laborious task. A plot is cleared with machetes and mattocks, and the brush is piled up to dry. Toward the end of the dry season, usually in March, the land is burned over. Immense areas every spring are cleared by fire, and the country seems to be burning everywhere. The burned-over land is plowed and planted after the first rain, and must be kept reasonably free of weeds, especially in the wetter parts of the country. If the rains come as they should—and they usually do—and if the frost does not destroy the crop—and it usually does not—the maize matures in ninety to a hundred and twenty days, depending upon the altitude, the grain is harvested, and the round is begun over again.

Now, the endless depletion of the soil and the destruction of its protective cover by fire have had certain obvious and disquieting effects. Leaving out of the reckoning for the moment the additional hazard of the white man's appropriating large areas of the best land for his own uses, it is clear that, as the population increases, more and more land must be brought under cultivation. That means that the milpas move farther and farther up the mountain sides and that land is cultivated until it is exhausted beyond the point of recovery. Denuded slopes and abandoned fields are then subjected to the intense battering of the summer rains, and what little soil remains is washed down the barrancas to the sea. It is a melancholy thing to see great once-cultivated areas now thrusting out their fleshless bones in unheeded protest against the vandalism of man.

The second effect, then, of the tyranny of maize is the increasing destruction of the soil of Mexico and the threatened destruction of her people. That this process is well along no thoughtful person can doubt. The pitiful stands of maize growing in pocket-handkerchief milpas on the tops of mountains, or in the cracks and crevices of their naked and rocky slopes, and the undisguised poverty of the communities depending upon them, are fierce reminders that maize is a savage task-mistress. To break her iron rule will require an inventiveness, patience, and fortitude as great as those of the ancients who first harnessed her to the service of mankind.

This speculation is not at all fantastic. Among the many theories advanced to account for the strange succession of the Maya "empires" in Yucatan, the most plausible is that of the exhaustion of the soil. The peaks of Maya culture occurred with a periodicity of about five hundred years. The intervening depressions were not caused by conquest, as far as we know. Yucatan could be successfully invaded only by water, as the surrounding jungle barriers were virtually impassable for large bodies of men without steel tools. It took Cortés some six months to hack his way through, and even so his army was almost defeated by starvation. The only seafaring people who could have attacked Yucatan by water in pre-Conquest times were the Caribs, and Yucatan was well beyond the range of their navigation.

The soil of Yucatan is a very thin layer of decomposed limestone. Although it is originally fairly rich, it will raise only two crops of maize before it is exhausted, and the farmer must clear new milpas. Available agricultural land is sharply circumscribed, and the uncontrolled birth rate must have pushed its fertility to the limit within a comparatively short time. Several generations of abundance were followed by a period of falling production and a depression of the subsistence level, until the bulk of the population had either to emigrate or die. An "empire" ended.

Centuries passed, during which the decomposition of the limestone created a new layer of soil. Yucatan was rediscovered by its ancient inhabitants, and the cycle was repeated. These migrations back and forth are indicated by the extensive Maya ruins at Palenque (Chiapas), at Copán (Honduras), and in the Lake Petén region of Guatemala, in each of which a similar periodicity occurs. At the time of the Spanish Conquest Yucatan was in the trough of one of its depressions and had been so for about two hundred years. The "capital" of the Maya at that time was on an island in distant Lake Petén.

Maize is the greatest but not the only culprit in the destruction of the soil. When the Spaniards imposed new burdens upon it they greatly accelerated the process. Sheep and cattle were introduced immediately after the Conquest, and they multiplied so rapidly that they soon overran the grass lands of the plateau and invaded the Indians' milpas. Their intrusion into the milpas was more or less effectively controlled by the Spanish government, but what could not be controlled was the constant erosion and gullying caused by the passage of millions of hoofs and the destruction of the cover by over-grazing. There is no way of measuring the damage. That it was very great and that it still continues is sufficiently evident from the present condition of the cattle and sheep ranges, such as those around Tlaxcala or in the highlands above Toluca, where the country is simply gutted by cattle erosion.

Another and equally serious cause of erosion has been deforestation. Wherever a Spanish town was built, the surrounding woods had to supply beams for the roofs and charcoal for the kitchens. The reconstruction of Mexico City after the Conquest completely destroyed the famous stand of cedar which extended over the hills beyond Texcoco to the mountains of Tlaxcala. The Spaniards continued the tradition of Castile, which was so thoroughly denuded of trees that an old saying has it that a bird can fly across Castile and never find a branch on which to rest.

The destruction of forests by the cities, however, was a small affair as compared with the ravages of the mines. Shafts and drifts had to be timbered with heavy beams, and all smelting was done with charcoal. Wherever a mining community (*real de minas*) was established a diseased spot began to appear, and it spread and spread until each mine became the center of something like a desert. As early as 1543 the Indians of Taxco complained to Viceroy Mendoza that all the forests near by had been cut down and that they were obliged to make a day's journey to get timber for the mines. The mountains of Zacatecas were once covered with a heavy forest. They are now rocky grass lands where goats have a hard time finding a living. The same story was repeated at Guanajuato, Ixmiquílpam, Zimapan, Pachuca, Chaucingo, Temascaltepec, Tlalpujahua, Parral, and all the other famous mining regions of Mexico.

Still another source of soil destruction is the traffic in *pulque*, the universal tipple of the highland peoples. The maguey (*Agave americana*, or century plant), from whose sap pulque is made, demands a great deal of soil. The enormous consumption of pulque—a quarter of a *billion* liters a year—has made the maguey the most typical, or, at least, the most conspicuous vegetation of the plateau. Huge haciendas are devoted to its cultivation. The plants are set out in rows, with wide alleys in between. The alleys are kept clear of grass and weeds, and the rains descend and the winds blow, and they wash and blow away the soil, until each alley becomes a gully and the land is no longer fit for anything but the growing of more maguey.

* * *

It is evident that the production of foodstuffs in Mexico is not keeping pace with the growth of population. Leaving out of account the general dislocation which for ten years followed the Revolution of 1910, the twenty years between 1920 and 1940 show no tendency to bring production above the figures for the early years of this century. Mexico has had to import primary foodstuffs in varying quantities, in fact, for the past fifty years. Meanwhile the population since 1930 has increased about five millions, or over *thirty per cent*. It looks as though the stage were set for a Malthusian tragedy. The government has, of course, been anxiously aware of the situation, and has tried to correct it by a number of measures, especially by breaking up many of the old haciendas into communal farms (*ejidos*), increasingly so during the past six years. The enemies of the "Six Year Plan," naturally, lay the blame for stagnant production at the door of the reformers, while its proponents cry sabotage. If, however, as I suspect, the main reason is that the soil of Mexico is breaking down under the heavy burden imposed upon it, and the people are eating themselves out of their own house, then the problem transcends in importance all others. By comparison the army problem, the Church problem, popular education, democracy itself, sink into insignificance if the land rebels and the tyrant has the last laugh.

Chapter III

HERNÁN CORTÉS

Throughout the length and breadth of Mexico one looks in vain for a town, village, or hamlet, or even a street, named after her great conqueror. One of the few monuments allowed to suggest the magnificent adventurer who destroyed a nation and laid the foundations of a new one is the lonely hill called El Peñón del Marqués, which stands in solitary bleakness in the salt waste of Lake Texcoco. The reason for this bit of irony is not difficult to discover. Since Independence it has been the patriotic fashion to decry all things Spanish, a fashion which has been carried in late years to the absurd length of denying Mexico's Spanish heritage altogether. In school texts and in the enthusiastic eulogies of the Mexican Revolution written by foreign commentators one reads that Mexico is fundamentally Indian, and one is invited to believe that the manifest destiny of the country is a reversion to something like the good old days before the Conquest, although none has yet had the hardihood to suggest the resumption of human sacrifice.

A necessary step in the establishment of such a thesis is, of course, the denial of everything which might conflict with it, and so the first objective of the campaign is the vilification of the conqueror, personified in Hernán Cortés, the destroyer. For this easy task there is an abundance of material available, most of it supplied by the Spaniards themselves, for, if the conquerors committed atrocities and, in general, conducted themselves like conquerors of all times, they did not escape a tremendous castigation at the hands of their articulate and powerful clergy. The most vociferous of their critics was Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, whose writings have had a curious fascination for critics of the Spaniards for four centuries. A few years ago I wrote some comments on this phenomenon which I should like to repeat here.

"A present-day reader of the historians of the Spanish conquest of America is constantly surprised by the heat they display. For centuries writers have bemoaned the iniquities of the Spaniards in the New World. A thesis on Spanish barbarity is irresistibly easy to support, and is irresistibly attractive to a foreigner. This hoary tradition dates from the publication in 1552 of the *Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies*, by Bartolomé de las Casas. In the pages of the 'Apostle of the Indies' one reads an indictment of his countrymen so complete, so circumstantial, so blasting, so thoroughly satisfactory, in short, that ever since his day it has been the indispensable handbook of the historians of America.

"Let us admit at the outset that there is little to be said from a humanitarian point of view in favor of the exploitation of weaker races by the stronger. However, if the Spaniards achieved earlier and greater notoriety in it than their European rivals, assuredly it was not because Spain's villainy was the blacker. Rather was it due to the extraordinary fear, hatred, and jealousy which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries she evoked from beyond the Pyrenees. This is understandable enough, in the light of the history of the times. Spain's championship of the Counter-Reformation and her long and bloody wars in the Low Countries account for the fear and hatred of her northern neighbors, while the stately procession of her treasure ships from the New World made it doubly easy to believe in her depravity.

"Thus when Spain was at the apogee of her political power and all good Protestants were shuddering at the thought of the dungeons of the Inquisition, the *Brief Rela-*

tion came as a veritable godsend to those most interested in believing it. Better still, it was written by a Spaniard of unquestioned authority, by a bishop! Wherever the Spanish name was hated the *Brief Relation* found a ready sale and a readier credence, and its numerous reprints show that the popular appetite for bloody horrors was fully as great then as now."

In the first century after its appearance the *Brief Relation* went through forty-two foreign editions: three Italian, three Latin, four English, six French, eight German, and eighteen Dutch!

In Las Casas and in his modern followers it is the custom to place against the black picture of the destroying Spaniard that of an innocent and unspoiled race, subject only to the mild rule of a kindly Nature. Rousseau is outdone by Stuart Chase, whose lively book on Mexico mournfully contemplates "four centuries and more of cringing abjection in a land where once civilized men walked free, fearless and masters of their destiny."

Ancient Mexico may have been such a paradise, but one may be allowed to doubt it. In any case it is true that Cortés put an end to it. And yet, while destroying that civilization (or rather, its political and religious structure), Cortés became the founder of modern Mexico, unless we are willing to deny all meaning to the word. For Cortés was a builder, however much we may deplore the violence which preceded the building. We do not like the connotation of the word "conquest," but we are apt to forget that Cortés was a child of the fifteenth century, the age of the Borgias, of Ferdinand, misnamed the Catholic, of Henry VIII, and of Machiavelli. He was not in the least squeamish about the means he employed. When the occasion demanded he lied, cheated, bribed, and cajoled. It is told of him that, when he scuttled his ships at Vera Cruz (surely one of the most fantastic exploits ever recorded), he left two of them afloat, one to carry dispatches back to Spain, and the other for some purpose of his own. Then, assembling his men, he offered to allow all those who wished, to return in it to Cuba. At once the partisans of his enemy, Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, stepped forward. Their names were taken, the ship was then scuttled, and Cortés had a black-list of suspects supplied by themselves. The story may be apocryphal, but it is one of those yarns which ought to be true. For Cortés always preferred to gain his ends by address or trickery, but, when he had to strike, he struck so terribly that a second blow was seldom necessary. Honest grumbling he met with "honeyed words," as Bernal Díaz del Castillo calls them (in his *True History of the Conquest of New Spain*), but treachery and disobedience ended on the gallows. In his absurdly small band of immortals he had to rule the toughest crowd of adventurers the Indies could produce, but his genius molded them into a disciplined, hard-hitting force, which he contrived to fill at the same time with something of his own flaming spirit and a belief in their destiny, just as later he inspired in the conquered peoples a feeling akin to worship. Even the crusty and envious old Bernal Díaz admitted as much.

"Here in this island [of Cozumel]," he wrote, "Cortés began to command in very fact, and God gave him such grace that to whatsoever he turned his hand he did well, especially in pacifying the nations and peoples of those parts."

"One morning after Mass," he wrote later, "after having scuttled the ships in the sight of all, and having gathered together all the captains and soldiers, Cortés spoke to us of military matters. He begged us to listen to him, and he discoursed in the following manner: He said that we were now in the midst of the campaign upon which we had embarked and that, with the help of Jesus Christ, we should win all our battles and encounters; but that we should prepare ourselves well for it, because, if we should be defeated, which God forbid, we could not raise our heads, being so few in number; that, having no ships in which to return to Cuba, we had no help but God, our strong hearts, and our good fighting. With all this he made many comparisons with the heroic deeds of the Romans. His speech was very good, and, to tell the truth, was spoken with more honeyed and eloquent words than those I have used."

The favorite thesis of the old chronicler was that Cortés never planned or made a move of importance without the advice and consent of his men. Bernal Díaz may well have believed it, being a simple soul and entirely unable to penetrate the subtle mind of his chief, but his thesis is untenable, however much one might wish to believe him. Dangerous and intricate campaigns call for the single direction of the commander. In spite of himself, Bernal Díaz proves my contention. It was always Cortés who decided and directed, and no detail of preparation was too small to escape his eye. The maintenance of discipline and order, the infinite precautions necessary on the march or in camp, the procuring of arms and supplies, vigor in attack and firmness in retreat —such were the responsibilities of Cortés alone, and it could not have been otherwise.

The greatness of Cortés as a commander was tested in defeat. Forced to fight his way out of Tenochtitlán (Mexico), into which he had rashly led his forces, he lost two-thirds of his men, all his artillery and firearms, and most of his horses, while few of the survivors escaped unwounded. "In truth," he wrote the emperor, "seeing the great strength of the Indians and the little resistance they found in us, because we were very tired and almost all wounded and fainting with hunger, we thought that our last day had come." Undaunted, he led the bleeding and exhausted remnants of his force back to Tlaxcala, where he had the address to convince his Indian allies that he would yet prevail. Then, with his reformed army and clouds of Indian allies, he returned to Tenochtitlán and, in one of the bloodiest and most stubborn sieges of history, took it.

It was a terrible and sickening deed, but I cannot wholeheartedly share the tears of Bernal Díaz, mourning over the fall of Mexico, while enjoying the fruits of the conquest. Neither does it become our own romantic historians to be too scornful of the Spanish barbarians, while we are living in a land wrested from the Indians in a conquest just as ruthless and infinitely more thorough than that of Mexico. In fact, the more I read of other conquests, including those of the past few years, the more I appreciate the moderation of Cortés.

The very completeness of the destruction of the Aztec power had the virtue of eliminating the necessity of another blow. Posing and, indeed, accepted as the deliverer of the other nations of Mexico from the tyranny of the hated Aztecs, Cortés received the homage and allegiance of all the surrounding peoples. Once the messy business of taking the capital was over, a new Cortés appeared, Cortés the builder and statesman. He had a vision of empire immeasurably greater than the petty dynastic ambitions of his sovereign, Charles V. "From what I have seen and learned of the similarity between this country and Spain," he wrote the emperor, while the Aztec power was still intact, "in its fertility, its size, its climate, and in many other features of it, I thought that the most suitable name for it would be New Spain of the Ocean Sea, and thus in the name of your Majesty I have christened it."

Tenochtitlán fell on August 13, 1521. For the next three years Cortés devoted himself to the colossal task of welding the warring fragments of his conquest into a new empire, a task in which he displayed to the full his gift of "pacifying the nations and peoples of those parts." His moderation and political wisdom became at once apparent, and make him almost unique among conquerors. "As I had always desired that the city should be rebuilt," he wrote the emperor in 1524, "because of its great and marvelous situation, I strove to collect the natives, who since the war were scattered in many parts. I still held the ruler of it a prisoner, but I charged one of his captains, whom I had known in the days of Montezuma, to repeople it, and, in order that he might enjoy the greater authority, I gave him the same office which he had held in the time of his sovereign.... At the same time I appointed other personages to the important offices which they had formerly held. I also gave these new officers such territory and people as were necessary to maintain them, although not as much as they had held before, or enough to make them dangerous, and I always take care to honor and favor them.

"They have done very well, and now the city is peopled with about thirty thousand families and is just as orderly as before. Moreover, I have granted them such liberties and immunities that they will increase greatly. They live quite as they please, and many artisans make a living among the Spaniards, such as carpenters, masons, stone-cutters, silversmiths, and the like. Merchants trade in safety, others live by fishing,...and others by agriculture, for there are already many who have plantations sown with all manner of vegetables which we have procured from Spain. I assure your Caesarian Majesty that, if we could obtain plants and seeds from Spain,...the ability of these natives in cultivating the soil and in making plantations is such that they would shortly produce an abundance, and great profit would accrue to the imperial crown of your Highness.... I beg your Majesty to order that...no ship be allowed to sail without bringing a certain number of plants which would favor the increase and prosperity of the country."

Cortés was driven by an insatiable curiosity about the vast dominions which destiny and his own genius had placed in his hands—or driven, perhaps, by greed, as his detractors would have it. However it was, he set about exploring New Spain in every direction. In the next few years his expeditions and those of his lieutenants covered the territory from the Gulf of California (appropriately named the Red Sea of Cortés) to Guatemala, and from the Pánuco River to Honduras. His men carried careful instructions regarding the treatment of the native population, which may be summed up as a policy of conciliation, with the use of force only when necessary. Cortés gave a vivid lesson in this policy on his first march to the capital, when he strung up one of his men for stealing a couple of chickens from an Indian. The man was cut down at the supplication of his friends, but the lesson was not forgotten. No lieutenant of Cortés, even the rough and ready Pedro de Alvarado, ever disgraced himself by indulging in the senseless atrocities which made the names of Pizarro and Guzmán infamous. Once away from the stern eye of their chief, his men interpreted their instructions rather broadly, but by and large Cortés achieved the pacification of his immense domain with extraordinarily little bloodshed. Cortés became the idol of the Indian population. What is more important for the subsequent history of New Spain, the policy of Cortés became the policy of its rulers for three centuries.

Cortés suffered the penalty of greatness. The envy and hatred of those who came too late played upon the suspicions of a jealous despot, and royal agents were soon in full cry after the vassal who dared to be greater than his lord. For six years Cortés was badgered by every means ingenuity could invent, and was finally driven back to Spain in 1527 to defend himself against the absurd and monstrous charges of his enemies. Even Charles V had not the face to support the machinations of his agents, and Cortés was vindicated. When he returned to New Spain in 1530 he was a magnífico, resplendent with honors and the fine title of the Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca. His arrival at Vera Cruz was the signal for a great outburst of rejoicing, among Spaniards and Indians alike. So universal was the demonstration that the authorities, fearing that he meant mischief, forbade him to enter the capital. Their fears may have been groundless; but Cortés was the lord of a princely estate; he was the most powerful figure in the land; he still had the support of his old conquerors, who would certainly have followed him, even in rebellion; to the Indians he was king, and they would have risen at his word. The government's nervousness was understandable. Cortés could have made himself an independent monarch, and he had every reason to resent his treatment at the hands of the crown officers. And yet he showed little tendency to abuse his power. The day of the conquistador was done, and Cortés may have sensed it. Thenceforth New Spain was to have a civil government, and Cortés, although he did his share of grumbling, did little to disturb it.

What the fate of New Spain would have been if Cortés had been a man of smaller stature is terribly illustrated by the history of Peru and New Galicia. Both Francisco Pizarro and Nuño de Guzmán were killers. They killed when there was no sense in killing. Pizarro raged through the most advanced culture in South America and left it a charnel house, while his inability to control his men left a legacy of violence and lawlessness from which Peru never fully recovered. Guzmán's destruction of the fertile western provinces of New Spain had no intelligence behind it. By comparison with his contemporaries and with some much later conquerors, Cortés was an angel of light.

During the nine years after his triumphal return from Spain Cortés devoted himself to an amazing number of activities. He built a fleet to explore the west coast and to discover a route to the Spice Islands. He erected graceful buildings and improved his estate. He introduced silk culture; he brought cattle and sheep from Spain; he planted wheat, fruit trees, and sugar cane. His energy was so great and his projects so ambitious that it was again whispered at court he was planning to make off with New Spain.

Nothing is more sensitive than a despot's ear. The government redoubled its badgering of the old conqueror. Viceroy Mendoza skillfully maneuvered him into a peevish opposition by blocking all his schemes. Finally Cortés could stand it no longer and went back to Spain to appeal to the emperor. But this time he was studiously ignored. His work was done, his glory had departed from him, and he wore out his spirit in a vain attempt to regain his sovereign's favor. He had spent his fortune and his great talents in the service of his country; he had added a domain to the Spanish Empire which passes the imagination; but he died neglected, in bitterness and disillusionment.

Such is the man who is now made into a fortune-hunting adventurer, whose vulgar ambition was to return to Spain and there lead the life of a swaggering hidalgo. I call him a builder. The Kingdom of New Spain was his vision and very largely his accomplishment.

Chapter IV

GANGSTER INTERLUDE

The spectacular conquest of New Spain had attracted a swarm of adventurers, all panting for a share of the spoils and willing to use any means to get it. They were an unruly and unscrupulous lot, not essentially different from the old conquerors of Cortés—with the very great difference, however, of having no Cortés to control them. Up to 1524 there was no government in New Spain but Cortés, the various municipal corporations he had set up, and the fiscal agents of the crown.

Early in 1524 Cortés had sent an expedition to Las Hibueras (Honduras) under one of his most trusted lieutenants, Cristóbal de Olid, to forestall the expeditions which were driving northward from Panama. But word came back that Olid had made an arrangement with that ancient enemy of Cortés, Diego Velázquez, governor of Cuba, by which Olid would be independent of Cortés. Such a challenge could not go unanswered, and Cortés sent a kinsman, Francisco de las Casas, to Honduras to bring Olid back to the fold. In the ensuing scuffle Olid was stabbed to death. Unaware of Las Casas' success, Cortés decided to go to Honduras in person. So, gathering together a force of his veterans and a host of Indian "friends," he set off late in 1524 on his famous and calamitous march. His way led him through the trackless morasses of southern Vera Cruz, across wide rivers alive with crocodiles, into the poisonous jungles of Tabasco, Chiapas, and Guatemala, and finally brought him out on the Gulf of Honduras. It was an amazing feat, one that deserves to rank with any march in history, but Cortés' two years' absence was a disaster for New Spain.

The Honduras expedition is not easy to understand. I cannot account for it by laying it to blind rage and ambition. Cortés was no simple and ingenuous soul to risk a kingdom for the sake of revenge. There were other and no less powerful motives, although they cannot be documented. Cortés' position in Spain had been getting steadily worse. Crown officers had repeatedly been sent over in an effort to curb his dangerous career. As early as 1521 a royal visitor had come from Santo Domingo, with instructions to stop him at all cost. The four treasury officials had been given the additional duty of spying on him and reporting back to Spain, and they interpreted his acts in the worse possible light. Up to 1524 his ingenuity had contrived to meet all threats, but he was definitely being crowded. It may be that in the Honduras expedition he saw an opportunity of confounding his enemies. In that unknown country who knew what great cities and what new treasures lay hidden? Another stunning triumph would put him beyond the reach of wagging tongues and petty jealousies.

Whatever the motives of Cortés may have been, the expedition to Honduras was the worst thing he could possibly have done. Trouble began immediately. The statesmanship he had displayed in the pacification of the country gave way to a fumbling and shortsighted opportunism. He was in such a hurry to be off that he left the government of the unsettled land in the weak hands of two of the treasury officers, Rodrigo de Albornoz and Alonso de Estrada. He had hardly got started when he was overtaken by the most direful news of rebellion and anarchy. He should have turned back at once, but, instead, he gave the two remaining treasury officers, Peralmíndez Chirinos and Gonzalo de Salazar, authority to take over. Mexico was split into two warring camps, the men of Velázquez against the men of Cortés. In the civil war that followed, the structure of the new state came down in a heap, and, when the smoke of battle had cleared away, the Velázquez men, with Chirinos and Salazar at their head, were in the saddle and the old conquerors of Cortés were eating dirt.

The rule of New Spain's first dictators was one of unashamed highjacking. Nothing stood in their way but the opposition of the old conquerors and the possible return of Cortés—an event which they so keenly feared that they repeatedly published stories of his death. But Cortés was very much alive. After his sterile expedition to Honduras he made his way by water back to Vera Cruz with a handful of rusty and scarecrow followers. Cortés had long since been given up for dead, and he was so wasted by hardship that his old companions in Vera Cruz did not recognize him. On the contrary, the sudden appearance of his bedraggled force caused such a panic that the guard was called out to repel the invasion. But once Cortés had made himself known his reception turned into a triumph. The news spread like wildfire. On his progress to the capital the returning conqueror was met by huge crowds of Indians, who celebrated the event in their charming way by strewing his path with flowers. His old companions were no less jubilant and showed their elation by rising and smiting down the hated usurpers, whom Cortés found in jail when he reached the city. There he set about repairing the damage done during his absence, removing the creatures of Chirinos and Salazar and restoring his own men.

His triumph was short-lived. He had been back only a few days when he heard that a new royal visitor, Luis Ponce de León, had landed in Vera Cruz, armed with full powers to remove him from office and take his *residencia*, that is, to hear any charges which might be brought against him. The new visitor hastened to the city, convinced by rumors that Cortés was on the point of taking over the country, and Cortés was reduced overnight to the status of a private citizen. But his luck still held. Ponce de León had no more than proclaimed the trial of Cortés when he was laid low with a fever and promptly died. He died so opportunely, in fact, that it was noised about at the time that Cortés had had a hand in it, but nothing was ever proved against him. Dying of a fever in those days was not so rare that one has to invent a murder to account for it.

The newest visitation plainly showed Cortés that he was being successfully undermined in Spain. He resolved to go back and fight his battle in person, and his resolution was hastened by a summons from the emperor himself. So, leaving New Spain again in the hands of Estrada, Cortés sailed late in 1527.

Meanwhile the crown, pursuing its policy of easing out the old conquerors, while setting up a permanent civil government in New Spain, appointed the first Audiencia of Mexico. The Audiencia was a peculiarly Spanish institution, being a supreme court and executive in one, with a sprinkling of legislative functions thrown in. The first Audiencia was originally composed of four justices (*oidores*) and a president. Two of the justices, however, died on the way over, and the two survivors, Diego Delgadillo and Juan Ortiz de Matienzo, with the president, Nuño de Guzmán, became in their turn the undisputed dictators of New Spain. The only curb on their power was the court of Spain, and it was far away. Their principal and most agreeable duty was to break the power of the conquistadores, particularly that of Cortés, and that duty was given the widest possible interpretation. In fact, Guzmán's chief qualification for his job was his fierce jealousy of Cortés, which became in time a consuming phobia.

Nuño de Guzmán offers a problem to the historian. He has been damned from his day to ours, so thoroughly that I find it hard to believe in the existence of such a monster. And yet nothing in his acts or in his sanctimonious writings, or in the testimony given at his trial, allows one to think differently. Nuño de Guzmán was one of those rare characters whose exclusive role seems to be that of destroyer. While governor of Pánuco from 1527 to 1528 he devoted himself to self-enrichment, enslaving as many of the natives as he could capture and selling them in the Antilles (twenty-one shiploads of them). His ferocious slave raids almost depopulated the province. Two years later, when he heard that he was to be removed as president of the Audiencia, he sought to avoid retribution and to repair his fortunes by leading a large force of idle Spaniards and Mexican "friends" into the rich provinces of the west, which he named New Galicia. Michoacán, Jalisco, Nayarit, and Sinaloa were invaded in turn, and in each the hordes of Nuño de Guzmán pillaged, tortured, enslaved, burned, and destroyed in the most senseless orgy of sadism ever witnessed in New Spain. Yet the influence of Guzmán and the presumed value of his conquest were such that the Audiencia allowed him to go unchecked for seven years. Flourishing provinces were permanently depopulated, and the hatred and despair of the victims mounted to such a pitch that they eventually rose against the Spaniards in the wild rebellion known as the Mixtón War of 1541.

Such was the man who in an evil hour was chosen to rule New Spain. His policy and that of his colleagues was to destroy Cortés and despoil the old conquerors, a course in which they were encouraged by the crown. With the power of the throne to support them, they willingly listened to every charge brought against Cortés and his men by malcontents and out-at-elbows adventurers. These charges were Guzmán's pretext for seizing goods, jobs, and encomiendas[1] of Indians, and distributing them among his friends. Guzmán established a regular reign of terror.

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[1] The encomienda, as will be more fully explained in the chapter on Work, was a sort of trusteeship, by which a conqueror was given the power to collect tribute from the natives, while presumably devoting himself to their protection and indoctrination.

To prevent news of it from getting back to Spain he set up a rigid censorship at Vera Cruz—a device utilized by various rulers of New Spain from the time of Cortés. The result of the Audiencia's cynical disregard of law was bitterness and dissension, enslavement of the Indians, and the wholesale spoliation of Indians and Spaniards alike. One might have expected the old conquerors to take up the arms which they knew so well how to use. But they were outnumbered, their commander was in Spain, and Guzmán had the mysterious machinery of the law on his side. Even so they might have been driven to civil war but for the work of one man, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, first Bishop of Mexico.

We know very little of the origin of Zumárraga. He was born in a humble Basque family about 1468. He was admitted to the Franciscan order, we do not know when or where. He seems to have had as good an education as could be procured in Spain. He was considered a man of letters and an eloquent preacher, and his rigid austerity earned him the reputation of saintliness. For the rest he seems to have led a humdrum life, slowly climbing the ladder of ecclesiastical office within his order, eventually reaching the dignity of guardian of his convent of Abrojo, Valladolid. Charles V happened to stop at Abrojo one day in 1527 and was so impressed with the abilities of the guardian that he kept him in mind for higher things. The time was at hand for organizing the Church in New Spain, and in December, 1527, Juan de Zumárraga was nominated by the emperor to head the diocese of Mexico.

Zumárraga felt himself unfitted to accept the post and was induced to do so only by the direct command of his superior. But once he had accepted it he bent his admirable energies to his new task. He did not wait for consecration, but embarked at once with the members of the first Audiencia of Mexico. One office given to Zumárraga was that of "protector of the Indians." It had been invented as a result of the clamors of the Dominicans over the barbarous treatment of the Indians of the Antilles. The new office did not fit into any existing scheme of government; it had no definition; no one knew what a "protector" was or what he had to do. In brief, it was an anomaly and a confusion. It introduced into the mechanism of law enforcement an agency responsible to no one. It tended to set up an independent government within the government. In time the anomaly was recognized, and the office of protector was abolished. But in 1528 it was a fortunate thing that such an office existed.

The machinations of Guzmán and his followers were directed, as I have said, against the old conquerors and their goods, but, since a great part of the conquerors' wealth came from the tribute paid by the Indians, the spoliation had an immediate and disastrous effect on native life. The Indians were used by Guzmán's men as a source of quick wealth, and they suffered every kind of extortion and abuse—not that the old conquerors were guiltless in that respect, but they were not in such a hurry. Under Guzmán New Spain was faced with the same horrible fate which had destroyed the Antilles.

Zumárraga's office of "protector of the Indians" manifestly gave him something to say in the matter, just what neither he nor anyone else knew, but something. He began by making mild remonstrances to the Audiencia and by demanding that his authority as protector be recognized. Needless to say, he was blocked by technicalities from the abundant store of those expert minds, the principal one being that Zumárraga was not a real bishop at all, but only a simple friar, since he had not been consecrated. They would be glad to recognize his authority, of course, when and if he could produce the proper documents. As it was, he had better devote himself to his religious duties and cease meddling in affairs of state.

The Indians, however, continued to bring in stories of abuse, and the Franciscans, possibly encouraged by Zumárraga, egged them on. Soon the bishop had, in effect, set up an independent court for the redress of Indian complaints, which multiplied beyond control, some grave, some frivolous, for the Indians showed at an early date considerable talent for litigation. The bishop was repeatedly admonished by the Audiencia to mind his own business and call off his friars. He retorted that he would do his duty if he died for it.

The battle grew hotter. The Audiencia forbade Indians and Spaniards, under heavy penalties, to go to the bishop on any matter concerning the treatment of the Indians. The bishop countered by exposing the whole situation in a sermon and by threatening to lay the matter before the king. Guzmán threatened to eject the bishop from the pulpit if he should repeat the performance. He also anticipated modern usage by circulating a scurrilous libel, in which the bishop and the Franciscan order generally were accused of such shocking conduct that Zumárraga could not bring himself to quote it, saying merely that it was "full of abominations." The incident which brought the row to a disgraceful climax began with the complaint of certain Indians of Huexotzingo (in the encomienda of Cortés), who charged that Guzmán's men were exacting such unbearable tribute from them that they were obliged to sell their women and children into slavery in order to raise it.

The bishop's wrath reached incandescence, and he resolved to have it out with Guzmán. It is a pity that the dry records of the time give few details of the epic scene which occurred between the irate prelate and the supercilious and violent Guzmán, with the two justices nervously looking on. After laying the Huexotzingo case before them, Zumárraga demanded that the tribute schedule be submitted to him for approval, in order that he might protect the Indians from extortion. Guzmán replied that no one was to meddle with the schedule established by the Audiencia, and that the Indians had to obey the law, even if they died for it. The bishop's answer is not recorded, but it must have been adequate, for the scene ended with Guzmán's threatening him with the gallows.

Guzmán badly misjudged the character of Zumárraga if he thought the old Franciscan could be bulldozed into submission. The bishop called his friars together and mapped out a campaign. It was decided to make a public issue of Guzmán's libel. Their best preacher, one Fray Antonio Ortiz, was selected to expose the whole affair in a sermon. The sermon and its subject were well advertised, and the church was crowded on that historic Whitsunday of 1529. In the congregation were Guzmán and Delgadillo, with a number of their henchmen. Fray Antonio got through the conventional part of his sermon and had hardly begun on the matter of the libel when Guzmán shouted to him to drop it. The preacher begged permission to proceed, but, at a signal from Delgadillo, a constable and several men surrounded the pulpit, shouting insults at the friar, and, seizing him by the cassock, unceremoniously yanked him down.

The scandal, as Zumárraga must have anticipated, was sensational. Open war was declared between the bishop and the Audiencia, and denunciations, excommunications, and reprisals were of daily occurrence. But Guzmán had been maneuvered into an untenable position. Even his friends the Dominicans could not stomach such irreverence. The power of the Church was against him, and the bishop could now lay the quarrel before the Council of the Indies with the certainty of being heard. It was not easy, however, to get a letter past Vera Cruz. The bishop's first letter was sent to Pánuco, but it was intercepted and used as a pretext for further persecutions. No one could be trusted to carry a letter to Vera Cruz, much less to Spain. So the old man made the long journey to Vera Cruz himself, and there found a Basque sailor from his own country whom he persuaded to take the risk. Between them they hid the letter in a cake of wax, which in turn was dropped into a barrel of oil. The Basque sailor was true to his charge, and the letter was delivered to the Council of the Indies.

That letter, in my opinion, was one of the most important ever written from New Spain. It was a complete and damning exposition of the two years of Guzmán's tyranny. The letter was so circumstantial and the bishop's reputation for integrity was so well established that Guzmán's friends at court were confounded and Guzmán himself was discredited. The evil effects of putting the direction of New Spain into the hands of corrupt and irresponsible men were finally recognized, and from that time onward the best brains and talent were chosen for its government. The year 1530 marked the beginning of an orderly and civilizing régime (always excepting the unfortunate territory where Nuño de Guzmán was allowed to complete the destruction known as the conquest of New Galicia). A great deal of credit for the change must be given to Fray Juan de Zumárraga, whose championship of Cortés and whose support of the conqueror's policy of conciliation of the natives permanently shaped the policy of the Council of the Indies, to the very great benefit of New Spain.

Among the builders of Mexico, then, we must include that of Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga, first Bishop of Mexico, who is commonly spoken of as an ignorant and superstitious zealot, the destroyer of the art and literature of the Aztecs.[2]

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[2] It is a curious commentary on the power of repetition that Juan de Zumárraga should be famous principally as the destroyer of the great Aztec library of Texcoco. At times it is a positive misfortune to be gifted with eloquence. In the luminous pages of Prescott the fact of the burning of the library can no more be questioned than the Chicago Fire. And yet the great Prescott relied on evidence which should have aroused his suspicions. It would be a dull business to review the heated controversy which raged over the question many years ago, especially since it should have been

settled for all time by the masterly treatment of Joaquín García Icazbalceta, in his *Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga*, published in Mexico in 1881. But Prescott is read and Icazbalceta is not, and so one still runs across bitter denunciations of the ignorant and fanatical priest who destroyed a nation's literature. The great burning has recently been further immortalized in the fine fresco by Diego Rivera which ornaments the National Palace in Mexico City.

The difficulty is, however, that there is no contemporary record of such a burning, or even of the existence of such a library. There was plenty of destruction of temples and images, carried out for the purpose of breaking the power of the Indian priests. It was an object lesson in the superiority of the Christian God. But there is no mention of the burning of manuscripts (or, rather, Indian picture writing) until Father Durán's *Historia de la Conquista*, which was written sixty years after the event, and even Durán says nothing about Zumárraga. After Durán's time the story added details in a sort of snowballing process, until in 1776 William Robertson, the Scotch historian, in his *History of America*, was able to denounce Zumárraga as an ignorant zealot, according to whose order, "as many records of the ancient Mexican story as could be collected were committed to the flames."

But it remained for Prescott to pronounce the bishop's doom. "The first archbishop of Mexico," he wrote, in his *Conquest of Mexico*, "Don Juan de Zumárraga,—a name that should be as immortal as that of Omar [the Caliph who in the seventh century is supposed to have ordered the destruction of the Alexandrian library]—collected these paintings from every quarter, especially from Tezcuco, the most cultivated capital in Anahuac, and the great depository of the national archives. He then caused them to be piled up in a 'mountain heap,'—as it is called by the Spanish writers themselves—, in the market-place of Tlatelolco and reduced them all to ashes!"

The "mountain heap" detail, by the way, seems to have been contributed by the Jesuit historian, Clavigero, in 1780. It has also occurred to me that it was quite unnecessary for Zumárraga to have the mountainous records brought around or across Lake Texcoco in order to burn them at Tlatelolco. And in all these stories of the great burning it never seems to have occurred to the authors that Zumárraga was a medieval bishop with a very trying job on his hands, and not a modern archeologist or antiquarian.

Chapter V

THE UPRIGHT JUDGES

The sensational revelations of Bishop Zumárraga and the effective lobbying of Cortés convinced the Council of the Indies that something ought to be done about New Spain, and done at once. The Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, which was the legislative and judicial body governing the Spanish possessions, had been organized in 1524, under the presidency of Fray García de Loaisa, General of the Dominican order. The Dominicans were the vociferous reformers of the Indian administration. Spurred on by the tireless Las Casas and supported by the solid arguments of Francisco de Vitoria, one of the greatest legal minds of the time, they were already envisaging their ideal state in the New World. With the failure of Nuño de Guzmán and the first Audiencia of Mexico, their opponents were discredited, and they had the opportunity to begin their reform. It was to be expected that these stern legalists would select a new Audiencia after their own way of thinking.

The five men whom they sent to New Spain to inaugurate the new order of things fully justified such expectations. The president was Don Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal, Bishop of Santo Domingo and president of that Audiencia. His four justices were all extraordinary men in their own right. It would be difficult to find more able men than the *licenciados* Juan de Salmerón, Alonso de Maldonado (who earned the nickname of "the good"), Francisco Ceynos, and Vasco de Quiroga (who later became famous as the first Bishop of Michoacán and who is still venerated as a saint by the Indians. Lately he has even achieved the honor of having a tourist hotel in Pátzcuaro named after him). Such men were the legal brains of the Hapsburg empire, and they were precisely the sort most feared by the feudal-minded conquistadores. Cortés, in one of his famous letters, begged the emperor to keep lawyers out of the Indies. The experience of New Spain with the first Audiencia certainly justified his strictures on the legal profession, but now Law in all her majesty was to be enthroned, and the conquistadores had to learn how to behave themselves.

The state of affairs in New Spain when the new Audiencia took over could hardly have been worse. The shysters and crooked bureaucrats put into office by Nuño de Guzmán had been making a profitable racket out of the administration of justice, prosecuting people on the most frivolous charges and collecting outrageous fees. The tyranny of the first Audiencia had created a permanent rift between the city council of Mexico and the government. The council naturally had with it the whole body of the old conquerors, who carried over their resentment to the new Audiencia. Their chief, Hernán Cortés, although recently back from Spain covered with honors, was still understandably sore from his treatment at the hands of Guzmán, and, for all the Audiencia knew, was waiting for a chance to set up an independent government—which he might easily have done. Guzmán, whose audacity and bad temper made him hard to control, was off in the west carving out a kingdom for himself. The capital was undergoing an orgy of unchecked corruption, and luxury and dissipation generally gave it the atmosphere of a mining camp during a boom. Crowds of idle Spaniards, with no ties of any kind, were very apt to pack up and leave at the slightest rumor in search of new bonanzas. In addition to this formidable state of things, the Audiencia was faced with the grave danger of an Indian uprising, because, more than any other element, the native population had suffered from the vicious government of Guzmán.

That Fuenleal and the second Audiencia were able in five years to impose a regime of law and order upon such a population strikes me under the circumstances as being one of the most astonishing feats in the history of government. At the outset their work was complicated by the discovery of an active conspiracy among certain groups of Indians. In order to meet the threatened rebellion, the Audiencia regretfully had to turn the military power over to Cortés, who clanked through the capital in an unnecessary display of strength in order to impress the new government and the populace with the fact that in a pinch he was still indispensable. To the dismay of the pious judges of the Audiencia he smashed the Indian conspiracy with characteristic vigor. They were not used to the ways of conquistadores, and, when Vasco Porcallo, the lieutenant of Cortés, brought back some two thousand Indian slaves taken "in rebellion," the shocked Vasco de Quiroga promptly released them.

There was one task, however, in which the second Audiencia had the enthusiastic support of Cortés and all his old conquerors, and that was the trial of Guzmán, Matienzo, and Delgadillo. The Audiencia long debated the question whether Guzmán should be brought back from his conquest of New Galicia to answer charges in person. Unfortunately, although the stories of his atrocities were too well known to be doubted, it was decided that the work of completing the conquest of the province was too important to be interrupted, and Guzmán was permitted to remain until he had "pacified" his territory. The record of his residencia and those of his two stooges make dismal reading, being a wearisome catalogue of tyranny and extortion. The hour of the two underlings had struck, and Matienzo and Delgadillo were arrested and sent back to Spain, where they died in prison, but Guzmán, although a proven criminal, was not touched until he had finished his work of destruction.

Outside of that one colossal mistake, the work of the second Audiencia was consistently good. Bishop Fuenleal was tireless in his protection of the Indians. He called together a conference of the most experienced men in the country to study their problem: Bishop Zumárraga, the guardians of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, Hernán Cortés, the four justices of the Audiencia, and several of the more prominent among the old conquerors. The recommendations adopted by the Audiencia included (1) the revision downward of the tribute, (2) the abolition of native carriers, the abuse of whom in the transport of military supplies had become a major scandal, and (3), of great importance in the subsequent history of New Spain, *the granting to Indian communities the right of self-government and the administration of justice, under their own elected officers.* In others words, they were to be allowed to continue their old form of government under Spanish supervision.

Indian towns were thus, at least theoretically, put on a basis similar to that of the Spanish-Roman municipalities. They were, of course, to be under the eye of Spanish priests and magistrates, but their internal structure underwent very little modification. By that wise measure Indian *caciques* were made over into officers of the crown. They were granted certain immunities and privileges, such as exemption for personal services and degrading punishments, and as a badge of authority they were to carry the king's staff of justice. They were, in short, erected into a native nobility, whose responsibility it was to keep the Indians quiet and enforce the king's law among them. They knew nothing of the king's law, of course, but the priest and the corregidor were there to instruct them. This solution of the native political problem bears the stamp of genius, and the marked lack of further Indian trouble in the more civilized parts of New Spain is evidence of its wisdom.

One of the most exasperating problems facing the new government was caused by the attitude of Bishop Zumárraga and his unruly friars. The good bishop had been instrumental in bringing about the new order, and he was loath to give up his authority as "protector of the Indians." In fact, he kept his private court going in competition with the Audiencia. His Franciscans had the pride of old timers and did not relish the recent ascendancy of the Dominicans, whom they did not like anyway. They continued to encourage the Indians to look to them for redress and to ignore the officers of the crown. The row has a somewhat comical look at this distance, but Spanish pride and touchiness made it a genuine crisis. The feudal tradition died hard, even among the religious. Zumárraga was a stiff-necked and opinionated old zealot, and it must have cost him something to see himself supplanted in what he thought was his rightful prerogative. It was all the more to his credit then that, when he saw the Audiencia was in the right, a timely rebuke brought him down off his high horse, and from that time on he cooperated fully with the government. He was a welcome and powerful ally, because his ascendancy over the Indians and the old conquerors was second only to that of Cortés.

I have mentioned the tendency of the unattached portion of the Spanish population to rush off on any new adventure which promised excitement or profit. A number of men had been drawn off by Nuño de Guzmán. Still others followed Pedro de Alvarado to Peru in his attempt to share the conquest of the Pizarros. Others had gone to join Francisco de Montejo in the conquest of Yucatan. Those who stayed behind wandered about the country lording it over the Indians and committing various crimes and minor extortions. Not the least prolific cause of trouble was their promiscuous mating with Indian women, whom few of them intended to marry. This class of haughty vagabonds gave the worst possible example of the Christian life to the recently converted Indians, besides keeping the country in a turmoil with their lawlessness. The problem persisted for many years, as the supply of vagabonds seemed inexhaustible. The Audiencia attempted to abate the nuisance by obliging married Spaniards to send home for their wives and by encouraging the others to marry Indian women. Some assurance of stability was promised to these men, if they would be good, by offering them town lots in the new city of Puebla de los Angeles and the considerable privilege of membership in a municipal corporation.

The second Audiencia continued the battle of the crown to reduce the power of the feudal encomenderos. This it did by removing all the encomiendas which had imperfect titles and incorporating them in the crown *pueblos de realengo*, under salaried magistrates called *corregidores.* By way of appeasement they offered the bereaved encomenderos preferment in the new posts, at two hundred pesos a year. The Audiencia was opposed, of course, by all those who looked upon New Spain merely as a source of quick wealth, but more and more of the older settlers, who had everything to gain from a stable government, were brought round to the support of the Audiencia.

The five years of the rule of Bishop Fuenleal and his hard-working justices lack the romance of the waving plumes and shining armor of military conquest, but they mark a conquest of far greater significance. The Mexican historian, Vicente Riva Palacio, sums up their work in a fine tribute. "[Under Fuenleal and the second Audiencia] the organization of the colony and the good government of the Indians began to be a fact. In the formless mass of the indigenous races and people, in the group of haughty and undisciplined adventurers, and among the enslaved and despised Indians, the severe profile of an orderly society began to be discernible, and the imperfect but visible forms of a government subject to law."

The second Audiencia had completed the first stage of its work by 1535, when New Spain was made into a viceroyalty. By its courageous and intelligent rule it had set a high standard for succeeding governments to follow. If the great viceroys who took over their work made a conspicuous success of ruling New Spain, the credit belongs in very large part to these upright judges.

Chapter VI

DON ANTONIO DE MENDOZA

Numbering the viceroys of New Spain is done, I suppose, in the interest of efficiency, but the unfortunate result is that one is presented with a long line of indistinguishable mediocrities, or fleshless automatons, inflexibly carrying out the orders of a narrow-minded despotism. If exceptions are allowed they are as likely as not to be vicious and corrupt men, prostituting their high office to amass a fortune, and even those admittedly superior are lost in the anonymity of an Arabic symbol.

But the fact is that the viceroys of New Spain, with singularly few exceptions, even in the slovenly period of the later Hapsburgs, were admirable public servants, trained for their profession, and had a high degree of personal responsibility. They had to have wide discretionary powers, for they were months away from Spain and had to be able to act when emergencies arose. They were usually chosen with the greatest care, for they were legally the king's person and had to uphold the majesty of the throne. Men of distinguished ability succeeded one another in a long and rarely broken line. This was especially true during the all-important first century, when the political structure of New Spain was taking shape. That now and then a crook appeared among them, or a stupid and small-minded tyrant, merely proves that New Spain could not hope entirely to escape the general fate of humanity. But it seems to me that the average stature of the viceroys of New Spain was so great that no country that I know of was ever so fortunate in its rulers. New Spain had plenty of things the matter with it, as we shall discover, but it enjoyed a long life of peace, stability, and relative prosperity, and afforded a signal contrast to the squabbling nations of Europe. Some of the men who made this possible are worth our knowing.

Don Antonio de Mendoza, first viceroy of New Spain, was a member of one of the greatest families of Castile. The history of Spain during her best period is filled with Mendozas. They gave Spain such men as Iñigo López de Mendoza, Queen Isabella's commander in the conquest of Granada; the Marqués de Santillana, warrior and distinguished poet of the fifteenth century; Pedro González de Mendoza, Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, patron of letters, humanist, friend and supporter of Isabella the Catholic, and one of the greatest churchmen of all time; and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, one of the best prose writers of the sixteenth century and brother of Don Antonio. Don Antonio himself had been trained as a diplomat and had been entrusted with delicate and important missions by Charles V. I have included all the above to indicate that by 1535 the Spanish crown was convinced of the importance of the new dominions in America and was determined to keep them in the hands of loyal and able men, tied to the crown by the closest bonds of tradition.

The policy of the crown with regard to New Spain had two general aims at that time: the destruction of the semi-feudalism of the conquistadores and the building up of a centralized political structure. The viceroyalty was no sinecure. Mendoza had to hem Cortés about with every restriction he could think of, without driving him to actual rebellion, and he had to do the same with the old conquerors, who were now a privileged aristocracy. He had to organize the administration of the Indians and protect them from irresponsible exploitation. He had to look after the crown revenues, to police the country, to build towns and roads and establish public services, to protect the fron-

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The policy of the crown with regard to New Spain had two general aims at that time: the destruction of the semi-feudalism of the conquistadores and the building up of a centralized political structure. The viceroyalty was no sinecure. Mendoza had to hem Cortés about with every restriction he could think of, without driving him to actual rebellion, and he had to do the same with the old conquerors, who were now a privileged aristocracy. He had to organize the administration of the Indians and protect them from irresponsible exploitation. He had to look after the crown revenues, to police the country, to build towns and roads and establish public services, to protect the fronstory was received. I do not know what motive Fray Marcos had for spinning his preposterous yarn. There may have been an understanding between him and Mendoza, because Mendoza was extremely anxious to get the expedition off before Cortés could do anything but protest and before Alvarado should appear and demand a share in it. However it was, Fray Marcos' romancing turned out to be one of the most expensive yarns ever told. The loss of money and lives in the Coronado expedition was so heavy that it brought a peremptory order from the crown that no more public funds were to be wasted on such nonsense. It should be noted in passing that, with this one exception, the conquest of America was carried through by private initiative, the crown contributing nothing, save, perhaps, the jewels which Queen Isabella was supposed to have pawned to help finance Columbus. The Coronado expedition got started on its wild-goose chase in February, 1540, just six months before Alvarado anchored off Colima.

Mendoza's problem with Alvarado was to keep him out of the Coronado expedition and to tie him up so tightly with the crown that he could not hope to set up another of the semi-independent feudal states which were anathema to the Hapsburgs. The great importance he attached to Alvarado is shown by his making the long journey to the west coast to interview him in person. A mutually satisfactory agreement was patched up, and for the next few months Alvarado was busy getting his fleet in shape. Even so, he probably would have proved unmanageable if it had not been for the outbreak of the Mixtón War.

Coronado's expedition had drawn off from New Galicia a great many men, and the country was left without adequate defense. The semi-barbarous mountain tribes north of the Santiago River (called Chichimecas, which is to say "wild men") had suffered heavily from the savagery of Nuño de Guzmán and were waiting for just such a chance to turn the tables. Their medicine men preached a war of extermination against the Spaniards, and soon the heights were swarming with excited and determined warriors. Unfortunately for them, they were hated and feared by the plains people; their propaganda campaign fell flat, and they had to go it alone. The Indians followed their ancient custom of fortifying themselves on mountain tops (*peñoles*), while carrying on planless and uncoordinated raids against the Spanish settlements. Nevertheless, the Spaniards were so vastly outnumbered, and their Indian allies were so terrified that they were in grave danger of extinction. The governor of New Galicia, Juan de Oñate, a brave and able man, led a force of Spaniards and Indian friends against the Chichimecas and was badly beaten. He sent a frantic call for help to Mendoza, who in turn asked Alvarado to go to the defense of Guadalajara. Alvarado brought a body of a hundred men and, later in June, 1541, led an attack in person on the peñol of Nochistlán, Jalisco. For the first time in his life the great Alvarado was defeated by the despised Indians, and he died in the retreat when a horse rolled on him.

Mendoza was free of the last threat to his authority, but he found himself with a first-class war on his hands. He had to take the field in person, and in a campaign of unequaled ferocity put an end to the most dangerous uprising which the Spaniards had to face in three hundred years. No one knows how many Indians were killed, but all who were captured, men, women, and children, were branded as slaves and distributed among the soldiers as booty.

Not only did Mendoza get rid of Alvarado; he fell heir to his forces and to his fleet of twelve vessels, with which he sent out two famous expeditions, that of Ruy Gómez de Villalobos to the East Indies, and that of Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo to the coast of California. The immense amount of literature devoted to Columbus and his crossing of the Atlantic has quite obscured the more hazardous feats of Magellan, Cabrillo, Villalobos, and other early voyagers of the Pacific. Magellan, at least, had a reasonably safe vessel, but Villalobos and Cabrillo set out on their voyages in Alvarado's home-made tubs, over uncharted seas, with inadequate provisions, and most of their men faced certain death from thirst, starvation, and scurvy. It may be argued, of course, that they did not know they were going to die, but my conviction is that they were indifferent to danger.

The Mixtón rebellion had hardly been broken when New Spain and all Spanish America were thrown into a panic by a rumor that a new code of laws for the Indies had been passed. The nature of it was well known. For many years the Dominicans, the most vocal of whom was Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, had been agitating for adequate protection of the native population from the barbarous exploitation which had depopulated the Antilles. They had already been instrumental in bringing about the passage of many laws, all tending in the same direction. That most of their reforms, such as their curious plan to set up a government of Jeronymite monks for the Indies, were abortive, or were successfully thwarted by the Spanish settlers, merely had the effect of making them redouble their efforts. Meanwhile, their power in the Council of the Indies grew mightily, and finally, after thirty years of unceasing toil, they were able, in 1542, to have the Council promulgate the famous code known as "The New Laws of the Indies for the good treatment and preservation of the Indians." That a civil government would jeopardize the very existence of an empire by submitting it to such meddling was the effect of long centuries of clerical domination, which made Spain a quasi-theocracy.

This remarkable document was based on the premises established by Francisco de Vitoria in 1532 (in his *De Indis et de Jure Belli Relectiones*), that is, that the Spaniards had no right whatever to the land or labor of the Indians, and that their intrusion into Indian lands was justifiable solely on the ground that it was necessary for the propagation of the Christian faith. The Indians were defined as free vassals of the crown, but it was recognized that they were in an inferior state of development and that, therefore, it was the crown's duty to exercise a protective tutelage over them until they should reach a state of responsibility. *This was the concept behind all Indian legislation in the Spanish Empire.* Since they had been entrusted by God to the care of the Spaniards, it was manifestly wrong to enslave them or to use their labor for private ends. Hence the granting of Indians in encomienda was wrong, as well as all forms of coercion. Implementing this philosophy were two articles, one of which abolished the encomiendas, which were to escheat to the crown on the death of the holders, and the other abolished Indian chattel slavery.

Such was the bombshell which exploded in New Spain in the year 1542. It should be borne in mind that the wealth of the old conquerors and their descendants consisted in large part in the tributes paid by the Indians whom they held in encomienda, and in the more or less legal privilege of using their labor. The old conquerors, with some justification, it must be admitted, looked upon themselves as a vested aristocracy, but for whom there would have been no New World for the Spanish crown to rule. With the enforcement of the New Laws they saw themselves and their families dispossessed and reduced to beggary. Could a man with a large household be expected to begin life over again in his old age, after having given his best years to the king's service? After all his hardships to be turned out like a criminal from the home he had wrung from a hostile land? Was this his reward for valor and sacrifice? So ran the pleas of the desperate settlers. It was as if some English king of the seventeenth century had suddenly gone mad and ordered all the freeholds of the North American colonies incorporated in the crown lands. It is safe to say there there would have been a war of independence just so much the sooner.

Such was precisely the reaction of the Spanish settlers. The roar of protest they set up was deafening, and the general excitement was so intense that if Mendoza had attempted to enforce the code New Spain would probably have rebelled. Fortunately, it was not the policy of the crown to embarrass the local governments with the job of enforcing unpopular laws. In this case a special officer was sent over in 1544, the *visitador* Tello de Sandoval. He was received with tight-lipped resentment. It was touch and go in New Spain. Mendoza knew it and Archbishop Zumárraga knew it, but Sandoval was determined to publish the New Laws at once. Mendoza and Zumárraga had the most ticklish problem on their hands. They had somehow to persuade the growling encomenderos to lie quiet while they patched things up, and they had the no less difficult task of arguing Sandoval into putting off the publication of the New Laws until they could get a lobby going back in the Council of the Indies. If they had failed in either of these efforts New Spain would almost certainly have been devastated by the same civil war which broke out in Peru and Central America at that time. In those unfortunate provinces the tactless handling of the situation by inflexible officers caused hundreds of Spaniards to lose their lives, while the disastrous effect on native life can only be imagined. Mendoza has been blamed for blocking the humanitarian laws of 1542, but there can be no doubt that he chose the wiser course. The New Laws were later subjected to critical revision, and the harsher features were sufficiently modified so that the Spanish settlers accepted them. They still grumbled loudly, but did not rebel.

It should be pointed out that humanitarianism was not the only motive of the New Laws. They were also designed as an effective weapon in the reconquest of the New World from the conquistadores. In short, the New Laws were part of the vast centralizing movement that was going on simultaneously in France, England, Austria, and Spain.

In America they were designed to reduce the power of the settlers by removing their feudal privileges and by making them paid employees (corregidores) of the crown, wherever possible.

The storm provoked by the New Laws passed for a time, and Mendoza was able to serve out the last five years of his reign in comparative quiet. No small part of his success was the result of his wisdom in handling the native population. It was imperative that he should supplant Cortés in the role of Great White Father, and he did so by adopting the same method of conciliation which Cortés had used so successfully. One of his devices was to set aside one day each week to hear Indian grievances. Crowds of Indians took advantage of the privilege of seeing the viceroy in person, and he listened patiently to their harangues. There is no record of his having done anything spectacular about them, but the wisdom of the custom was manifest. It was continued by Mendoza's successors, until, in 1573, this form of redress had become so well established, and the press of Indian affairs had become so great, that a separate tribunal was set up for handling them, the General Indian Court, which for two hundred and fifty years acted as a shock-absorber between the races of New Spain.

Don Antonio de Mendoza ruled for fifteen years. When, in 1550, he left to take over the viceroyalty of Peru, peace, order, and law were so firmly established, and the prestige of the crown had attained such a height, that New Spain was to weather civil conflict until the whole Spanish machine collapsed, in 1808.

Chapter VII

DON LUIS DE VELASCO

The viceroys of New Spain were apt to reflect the character of the reigning monarch. Thus Antonio de Mendoza was a magnífico in the grand tradition. He represented the pomp and splendor, as well as the hard-boiled imperialism, of Charles V. In 1546 the management of the Indies was put into the hands of the twenty-year-old Prince Philip, who was later to become famous as Philip II. Philip was very different from his father, who had always been regarded as a foreigner in Spain. Philip, on the other hand, was the most Spanish of Spaniards. He was a monarch in the tradition of Isabella the Catholic, a sort of Oriental god-king, with a strong mystic streak and an abiding conviction that he had been chosen by the Almighty to lead his country and the rest of the world into the paths of righteousness, which ran strangely parallel to those of Spanish aggrandizement. Under Philip Spain enjoyed a rule of puritanical virtue comparable to that of England under Cromwell. Under him the public service became for a time relatively free from the corruption which always tended to creep in at the slightest opportunity. His rule resembled in this respect that of his great-grandmother, Isabella, who swept grafting officials and corrupt judges out of office, until Castile was the best-governed country in Europe.

Don Luis de Velasco, the successor of Mendoza, was the sort of viceroy one would expect Philip to choose. He combined sagacity and humanity with a rigid sense of duty and dignity and a capacity for hard work. He possessed precisely the qualities needed to continue the consolidation of

New Spain. The New Laws of 1542, which had brought the colonial dominions to the verge of disintegration, had undergone careful revision, but their fundamental principles had not been materially altered. That is, the crown was still determined to set up in New Spain and in the rest of the Spanish Indies a centralized pyramidal form of government, in which all elements would be subordinate to the supreme power of the throne. The New Laws were not abrogated, nor were they a failure, as has so often been stated. They had to be revised in the direction of realism and workability, and they became incorporated into the great fabric of the Laws of the Indies. A gesture was made to ease the pain of the encomenderos, who were allowed to enjoy their encomiendas for two generations. (The law was repeatedly revised, in fact, and the encomenderos became in time a class of pensioners. The encomiendas were not abolished until the eighteenth century.) The most valuable privilege outside of collecting the tribute was removed, that of using the labor of the Indians without pay. The law could not always be enforced, and I suspect that local officials were usually lenient with the encomenderos, but it is significant that in the voluminous records of the General Indian Court there are very few complaints brought against them. In another important respect the New Laws stood firm. Indian chattel slavery was abolished.

Indian slavery requires a word of explanation. From the time of Columbus it had been the practice of a good many Spaniards to enslave, on one pretext or another, as many Indians as they could capture, and sell them in the mines. Columbus himself planned to go into the slaving business and was only stopped by Queen Isabella, after he had shipped a cargo of Indians to Spain. The usual pretext for taking slaves was rebellion. Once the Indians had submitted to Spanish rule and had taken the uncomprehended oath of allegiance to the crown, any act of rebellion could legally be punished by enslavement. It became a racket for certain

Spaniards to provoke the Indians to armed resistance and then seize them as slaves. It will be recalled that Nuño de Guzmán achieved part of his fame in that manner. The crown had placed many restrictions on the enslavement of the Indians, but at the time of Velasco's appointment (1550) there was still a large body of these unfortunates scattered about the Spanish settlements and mining camps, estimated at between two and three hundred thousand. Their principal employment was washing gravel in the placer mines, grinding ore in the silver mines, and pearl diving. Many others were used as domestic servants and field hands. The revised New Laws ordered the release of all slaves whose owners could not show proper titles of possession. Now, since records were rarely kept of the manner in which slaves had been acquired, it was fairly obvious that all the slaves would be set free and that the owners would lose heavily. It was the difficult and dangerous task of Velasco to put the law into execution.

There was the expected bitter cry of protest. The slave owners rushed the usual lobbies back to the Council of the Indies. One of them was conducted by our old friend, Bernal Díaz del Castillo. They were instructed to explain to the Council the disastrous effects which the enforcement of this unjust law would inevitably bring. Freeing the slaves would stop all the most profitable activities of the country; the gold mines would cease operation; the crown revenues would shrink to nothing; uncounted citizens would be ruined; and, in general, the place would go to the dogs. To the everlasting credit of the Council of the Indies, these powerful arguments had no effect, and Velasco and the governors of the other dominions were instructed to carry through the program. In New Spain alone it was estimated that sixty thousand slaves were set free. That was over three hundred years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

It must be emphasized again that no act of the Council of the Indies can be ascribed to undiluted humanitarianism.

The members of the Council were high-minded men, but they were also practical administrators, and it would not have been good administration to subject the crown to a heavy loss of revenue. Velasco's famous statement that "the liberty of the Indians is worth more than all the mines in the world, and the income which the crown receives from them is not of such a nature that the crown could on that account crush under foot human and divine law," is not altogether accurate. One of the arguments which made the emancipation of the Indian slaves palatable to the crown was that the freedmen would become tribute-paying subjects, which they were not so long as they remained slaves. Since the free Indians paid a tribute of a gold peso a year to the crown, it will be seen that the argument had weight.

The profit accruing to the crown from Indian tributes, however, turned out to be disappointing. Tribute in bullion could only be had in those districts where gold was extracted, mostly in Oaxaca. In the rest of the country a great part of the tribute was paid in kind: so many cotton blankets, so many chickens, so many *fanegas* of maize, etc. These articles were brought to the encomendero or to the corregidor and had to be stored or disposed of. Moreover, the tribute was brought in on fixed days, usually at the end of the harvest, and the resultant glut brought prices down. Speculators not infrequently made a business of buying up the tributes and distributing the produce where it could be sold at a profit. The crown made so little out of the tribute, and the process of collection was so complicated and costly, that later viceroys urged its abolition altogether. It is interesting to note that the tribute was not done away with until the nineteenth century, when it was made a political issue to attract Indians to the cause of independence.

The tribute had long been the subject of discussion before Velasco's time. In the good old days of free enterprise the encomenderos had let their consciences be their guide and had tended to collect everything in sight. Numerous attempts on the part of such men as Bishop Zumárraga to bring the tribute within capacity to pay had met with scant success. So one of the many duties of Velasco was that of "moderating" the tribute. He was also charged to inspect the titles of encomiendas and, in general, to continue the work of Mendoza in putting the encomenderos in their place.

Velasco was fortunate in having men to assist him who were as stern and incorruptible as himself. The judges (*jueces visitadores*) whom he sent to all parts of New Spain had an extremely ticklish job to do, and their only weapons were a piece of paper and the indispensable notary. The treatment they might expect at the hands of the irritated encomenderos was illustrated by the experience of Diego Ramírez, who was sent into the northern and eastern provinces. He was promptly seized by the encomenderos, thrown into jail, and sent back to the capital to answer a lot of trumped-up charges. Needless to say, Velasco and the Audiencia dismissed the charges, and Ramírez was sent back to the same territory, where he worried the encomenderos for two more years, until his death.

Not all of Velasco's abundant energy went into internal administration. Ever since Hernando de Soto had explored "La Florida" in 1542, rumors of its wealth kept circulating. Other motives, such as securing that part of New Spain from the French, induced Philip II to undertake its settlement, and Luis de Velasco was given the job. Velasco got together a large force of 1500 Spaniards and Indians and several vessels, and put the expedition in charge of Tristán de Luna. It got away in 1559, but ill luck attended it from the beginning. Luna attempted a settlement on Pensacola Bay. Starvation, disease, storms, and hostile Indians, however, took the spirit out of the men in two terrible years, and Luna was removed from the command. His successor met with no better success, and the broken remnants of the expedition returned to New Spain in 1561.

Notwithstanding the expensive failure of the Florida expedition, Philip had another favorite project, which he also put in Velasco's hands. Ruy López de Villalobos, whom we last saw in some of Alvarado's tubs on his way to the Spice Islands, had discovered the Philippines in 1542, but had not been able to find a passage back. The crown had never given up the notion of making the islands an entrepôt for the China trade, which up to that time had been monopolized by the Portuguese. But first a route eastward across the Pacific had to be found. The westward passage offered no difficulty. All one had to do was to steer into the belt of the northeast trade winds and stay there. The return was a very different matter. Tacking back and forth across eight thousand miles of water in the teeth of the trades would have taken an eternity, and no ship of the day could have carried enough provisions to make it. The route by way of the Cape of Good Hope was closed by the Portuguese, who had no intention of sharing the China trade with anyone. Spain, however, had never abandoned the quest of Columbus. After Magellan had discovered the westward passage to the East, several expeditions had followed him in an attempt to break into the Portuguese monopoly. One of those early expeditions was that of Jofre de Loaisa, in 1525. In his crew was an obscure Basque sailor by the name of Andrés de Urdaneta.

Urdaneta was born late in the fifteenth century. In his youth he had been a soldier of Charles V and had fought in Italy with the invincible legions of Gonsalvo de Córdoba, *el Gran Capitán*. When he reached the East Indies with Loaisa and found he could not return, he spent eleven years sailing and trading in those waters, in defiance of the Portuguese, and storing up a vast amount of useful information. He finally completed the circuit of the globe in a Portuguese ship, landing at Lisbon in 1536. He was in New Spain in 1542 and refused Mendoza's offer to take a command in the Villalobos expedition. Ten years later Urdaneta retired from the world and took the habit of St. Augustine. Twelve years after that, when Velasco was getting together the new expedition to explore the Philippines and discover the eastward passage, the only man in New Spain who knew anything about Asiatic waters was Fray Andrés de Urdaneta. Velasco vainly tried to induce the old monk to command the expedition, but he did get his consent to go along as an observer and technical adviser.

The fleet put to sea under the command of Miguel López de Legazpi, sailing from Acapulco in November, 1564. Legazpi made the westward passage without difficulty. He founded the city of Manila and decided to remain and complete the conquest of the Philippines. The discovery of the eastward passage was entrusted to Legazpi's nephew, Felipe de Salcedo, who sailed from Manila on June 1, 1565, in a single shorthanded vessel—a poor affair, or, as the old chronicle has it, a "gift ship." (It should be explained that in the frugal Spanish tradition one gives away things to get rid of them.) Fray Andrés had an idea that the westerly winds which were known to prevail in the North Atlantic might also be encountered in the North Pacific, and he instructed Salcedo to sail north until he should find them. A few days out from Manila the sailing master and the pilot died, and Fray Andrés had to take the wheel. Scurvy began eating into the crew, and soon there were not enough hands to work the vessel. But Fray Andrés beat his way northward, through calms and squalls and contrary winds, for two thousand miles, and finally ran into the westerlies at Lat. 36°. At that point he turned east and sailed before the wind to the coast of California and then rode the northwest gale down to Acapulco, arriving there on October 3, 1565.

Urdaneta had completed the first voyage round the Great Circle, 10,000 miles, in four months and two days. Fourteen of the crew had died of scurvy, and at Acapulco no one had the strength even to drop the anchor. Only two men, in fact, were able to stand at all. One was the captain, Felipe de Salcedo, and at the wheel, in his tattered monk's habit, was the gaunt figure of old Fray Andrés.

The Eastward Passage had been solved. From that day onward heavy galleons were to bring to New Spain the silks, spices, and ivory of the East, and, on the trip back, were to flood Asia with good Spanish dollars.

It is a pity that Luis de Velasco did not live to see the end of one of the most remarkable voyages in maritime history. I suggest that, when another of our poets is looking about for a heroic theme after the style of *Conquistador*, he write us the story of the Iron Friar.

It would be an injustice to Don Luis de Velasco to leave the impression that he was a monster of sternness and purity. Off duty he was an affable and kindly gentleman, fond of good living and exceedingly proud of his superb horsemanship. He loved to lead the hunt and on feast days joined in the colorful *juego de cañas*—a sort of jousting in which opposing squads of horsemen dashed at each other armed with light canes. The canes were thrown like javelins and caught on shields, while the horsemen circled about in a cloud of dust and with a satisfactory lot of noise. Don Luis was also very addicted to bullfighting, which in those days was performed by men on horseback and which tried to the utmost the skill of the riders. In short, Don Luis was a very popular viceroy, and I suspect that no small part of his popularity among the pleasure-loving Mexicans was due to his sportsmanship.

Don Luis deserved his popularity. What, possibly, he did not deserve was his mother-in-law. Doña María de Mendoza was a great lady from a famous family, but, at the same time, she was a stiff-necked and domineering old harridan and soured the viceroy's domestic life. For Don Luis was a bit on the domineering side himself and was fond, as the Spaniards say, of wearing the pants in his own house. Every one else, though, the servants, the palace guard, the vicereine herself, jumped when Doña María spoke. The cast was well chosen for a domestic comedy, and the rows between Don Luis and Doña María were the talk of the palace. Their feud took on the dignity of an affair of state, for Doña María's complaints were read by the Council of the Indies. She had a long bill of grievances, the bitterest of which was that Don Luis hated her so ferociously that he would not allow her to see her own daughter. It is related that one day Don Luis went to Doña María's apartment and surprised her writing another letter to the Council of the Indies. He rudely snatched it out of her hand and began to read. She snatched it back. High words were exchanged, and possibly other things. In the midst of the row it was announced that Archbishop Montúfar was in the antechamber. Don Luis emerged very calmly, kissed the ring of his Eminence, and excused himself. The archbishop went into Doña María's apartment and found her sitting on the floor, disheveled and weeping. Blood was streaming from a gash in her forehead, and beside her lay a silver candlestick. No one ever learned precisely what happened, but from then on peace reigned in the viceroy's household.

* * *

Peace had descended on New Spain also in the fifteen years of Velasco's rule. His unflagging zeal in enforcing the New Laws earned him the honorable title of "Father of the Indians." He died in office on July 31, 1564, and in the universal grief of all classes was given the finest tribute it is possible for a man to receive. The cathedral chapter of Mexico wrote to Philip II: "His death is mourned by all of us here in New Spain, for he governed with such prudence and rectitude, doing wrong to none, that all looked up to him as a father. He died on the last day of July, very poor and in debt. He always held that his principal duty was to do justice, without fraud and without reward, serving your Majesty and maintaining the realm in peace and quietness."

Chapter VIII

THE FRIARS

Since independence the *cuestión palpitante* in Mexico has been: What about the Church? Compared with it all others —oil, land, the national debt—are "tarts and painted bread," as the Spaniards say. The efforts of liberal leaders, from Benito Juárez to Lázaro Cárdenas, to break the immense power of the clergy have brought on the bitterest conflicts in Mexican history. Essentially it is the fight of the colonial régime, which lives on in the Church, with all its authoritarian, clerical, and caste implications, to survive against the attacks of such movements as the middle-class liberalism of the nineteenth century and the proletarian revolution of the twentieth. There is nothing peculiarly Mexican about it. Precisely the same battle has been going on in Spain since 1812. There is not a phase of Mexican life which is not profoundly affected by it. The most incendiary invective is employed by both sides. The emotional content of the struggle is so high, in fact, that compromise is unlikely, if not altogether impossible.

The dispute, punctuated with gunshots and splashed with blood, has been going on for over a century, with no end in sight. On the Church's side are the conservative elements: the clergy, the landed class, most shopkeepers and business men (especially their women folk), a good part of the peasantry, and the unorganized pious generally. On the other side is the Party of the Mexican Revolution, with its strong backing of labor organizations and the huge federal bureaucracy. The economic division is evident. The Army has been now on one side, now on the other, and at present seems to be split in its sympathies. I do not know where the solution lies, or even that a solution exists. Meanwhile, it may do some good to understand the nature of the hold which the Church has on the people of Mexico and how it came about.

The fight for survival is being carried on today by the secular clergy, whose place in New Spain will be the subject of a later chapter. Back in the century of the Conquest, however, the secular clergy were not the most numerous or the most powerful religious element. The mendicant orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic had held in Spain, since the thirteenth century, a special and privileged place. Organized as semi-autonomous corporations, they lived under their own rules and owed direct obedience only to their generals in Rome. They became something of an anomaly in the centralized despotism of Isabella the Catholic, but, as the secular clergy fell under the control of the crown, the value of the independent regular orders became apparent. Their comparative freedom from censorship made them a refuge for the finest intellects in the country—men who felt free, and considered it their Christian duty, to criticize everything of which they disapproved, including the acts of the monarchs themselves. They were the only ones who enjoyed that privilege. By its exercise they had an influence on the history of Spain and America out of all proportion to their numbers. Monks had filled, and continued to fill, the highest offices of the state. Isabella's most trusted adviser was a Franciscan, Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, certainly one of the greatest statesmen Spain ever produced. The man whom Isabella put in charge of the important task of badgering the Moors and Jews into a Christian heaven was Tomás de Torquemada, a Dominican and a rigid Pharisee, whose Inquisition captured the shuddering imagination of the world. The sweeping reform of the political structure of the Indies known as the New Laws (which I have already discussed) was the work of the Dominicans of the Council of the Indies, under their general, Fray García de Loaisa, whose sparkplug was Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. The humanitarian philosophy upon which the New Laws were based was developed by another Dominican, Fray Francisco de Vitoria, a professor of theology at the University of Salamanca. The first two bishops sent to New Spain were Fray Julián Garcés, Bishop of Tlaxcala, a Dominican, and Fray Juan de Zumárraga, Bishop of Mexico, a Franciscan.

In the sixteenth century the two mendicant orders were filled with able and fearless men, and, when the time came to undertake the remolding of the peoples of the western hemisphere, the task rightly fell upon those who had the talent, the conviction, and the training to carry it through.

The founders of the two orders were men of entirely opposite characters. St. Dominic was the embodiment of legalism. His God was the God of Law–Law supreme and inflexible–and woe to the wretch who transgressed it! The God of St. Francis was the God of charity and humanity. Man to him was a weak and fumbling creature, most of whose endless shortcomings were easily forgiven by his pitying Creator. The members of the two orders accurately reflected the difference between the founders. The Dominicans bent their extraordinary legal talents to the erection of a City of God in the New World. Their work in the missionary field was secondary to their work in the Council of the Indies. Their blueprints were frequently drawn up in ignorance of the nature of the problems to be solved and in defiance of human nature, but the humanitarian legislation of the Indies was their accomplishment, based upon the noble assumption that the Indians were God's creatures, to be protected from abuse in this life, and saved from damnation in the next.

The Franciscans, on the other hand, had few preconceived notions of their mission, and no blueprints. They were practical men, a bit contemptuous, possibly, of legal formalities. For that reason it was a fortunate thing that they were the pioneers in the evangelization of New Spain. Their comfortable humanity, their readiness to make use of any device which came to hand, their tireless personal intervention for the protection of their charges, their mild rule, and inexhaustible good will—these factors did more to win the affection and veneration of the Indians than any amount of orthodox theology could have done. It is difficult to imagine how any other approach could have succeeded as well.

The original purpose of the Council of the Indies was to send simultaneously to New Spain missions from the two great mendicant orders. The Franciscans were the first to get under way—I do not know why, unless it was that the Dominicans had virtually monopolized the missions of the Antilles and the Franciscans were thirsting to even the score. However it was, Fray Juan de Glapión, Franciscan confessor of Charles V, and Fray Francisco de los Angeles obtained a bull from Pope Leo X on April 25, 1521, granting them permission to preach to the people of New Spain. That was six months before the fall of the capital. They were given, in addition, certain extraordinary powers usually reserved to bishops: the power to administer all the sacraments, to absolve from all excommunications, to confer and confirm (in the absence of a bishop) minor orders, to consecrate churches and provide them with ministers, and *no cleric or secular priest might interfere with them, on pain of excommunication.* The bull was the charter of the regular orders in New Spain. In effect, it set them up into independent states. The stout defiance of Nuño de Guzmán by the Franciscans was possible because they were out of his reach. They also annoyed subsequent, and better, officers.

The first small vanguard of the Franciscan invasion reached Tlaxcala in 1522. Of the three friars who composed it the most famous was Fray Pedro de Gante, reputed to be half brother to the emperor. They immediately perceived that their first task was to overcome the obstacle of language. They set up their first primary school (*doctrina*) in Texcoco, where they tried to teach the Gospel, reading, writing, singing, and the playing of musical instruments, to the sons of the local Indian nobility, and themselves studied harder than any. No regular organization, however, was attempted until two years later, when the first large company of Franciscans landed at Vera Cruz in 1524, under the leadership of Fray Martín de Valencia. Obeying a pious impulse, and with an astonishing intuition, the friars did precisely the thing best calculated to arouse wonder and veneration of the Indians. *Barefoot, in their coarse robes, they walked the whole heart-breaking distance from Vera Cruz to Mexico.* The men of Cortés would hardly have been human if they had not been as deeply moved as the Indians. When the friars reached Mexico the conquistadores pressed about them to kiss the hems of their robes and beg their blessing, Cortés first. Bernal Díaz was among them. Fifty years later the scene was still fresh in his memory.

"When Cuauhtemoc and the other caciques saw Cortés fall to his knees and kiss the friars' hands their astonishment was very great. And when they saw that the friars were barefoot and thin, and that their habits were ragged, and that they did not ride horseback, but walked, and were very pale, and, when they saw Cortés, whom they considered an idol, or something like their gods, thus kneeling, all the Indians followed his example, so that now, when the friars come, the Indians receive them with the same reverence and respect."

This admirable band of men, armed with nothing but good will and faith, set about their conquest of New Spain with an energy and daring and intelligence equal to those of Cortés himself. *And their conquest endured.* Beginning with three centers of instruction at Tlaxcala, Huexotzingo, and Texcoco, in a few years they had set up their doctrinas in every Indian town of importance south of the Chichimeca frontier, as far as Yucatán and Guatemala. The area corresponded roughly to the military conquests of Cortés and Guzmán. From their convents in the head towns (*cabeceras*) of the Indians they kept their friars continually on the move in the surrounding territory, baptizing, confirming, marrying, saying masses, and teaching the elements of the Christian doctrine and government. In addition to their work in the doctrinas, they taught European techniques of weaving, dyeing, ceramics, masonry, carpentry, and agriculture. They acted as arbiters in disputes between their parishioners. They interceded for them with Spanish settlers and magistrates. They healed the sick, punished the wicked,[1] comforted the dying, and buried the dead. In

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[1] The whipping-post was considered an indispensable auxiliary for the implanting and maintenance of the Christian virtues, as well as for the punishment of secular offenses. It need not shock us that it was part of the equipment of a mission. Our New England ancestors took the scriptural injunction about sparing the rod quite as seriously. Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta explained the use of the lash in a letter to Philip II, in 1587.

"And hence," he wrote, "one may perceive the error of those who think it a cruel thing for a friar or priest to have the Indians flogged who are in his charge, whereas it is necessary for their well-being and profit. This error comes from ignorance of the character of the Indians, for the whip is as necessary to them as the bread of their mouths, and so natural that they cannot live without it among themselves. Indeed, they themselves say as much. When the whip is absent, like children they are spoiled, for, if an Indian gets drunk or takes a mistress, or if he beats his wife, or if she runs away from her husband, or if they refuse to go to Mass or to the doctrina when they have not learned their lesson, or if they have sworn falsely at their wedding, then with a dozen lashes the matter is settled and they learn their lesson. But if the whip is withheld not only is their correction impossible, but they become bolder and commit greater sins."

Two and a half centuries later John Stephens observed how thoroughly the Indians had "learned their lesson." "In front [of the cabildo]," he wrote, in his *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, "was a new whipping-post. There was not a word spoken; but a man was brought up before it, his feet and wrists short, the friars had, in an amazingly short time, completely replaced the native priests as the natural leaders of Indian society.

The "convent town" became the typical Indian town of the better sort. It was ruled by native officers under the direction of the friars, who intervened in village affairs whenever they thought it necessary. The Indians complained somewhat against the arbitrary interference of the friars, and the Spanish settlers complained a great deal, because, they said, the friars used multitudes of Indians for building convents and chapels, and thus kept a considerable amount of labor out of circulation—labor which the settlers thought might be more profitably employed in field or mine. But the friars took care of their own. They defended the complicated Indian hierarchy of the village, which included such offices as cantor, truant officer, and the like, as well as the alcaldes and a long list of minor officials.

The friars organized the Indians of their parishes into brotherhoods (*cofradías*), after the fashion of the church guilds of Spain, and each was made responsible for the celebration of some feast of the Christian calendar. The organization of these cofradías was one of the most effective devices hit upon by the friars for the consolidation of the new society. Membership in them, and especially the privi-

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tied together, and he was drawn up by a rope which passed through a groove at the top of the post. His back was naked, and an alguazil stood on his left with a heavy cowhide whip. Every stroke made a blue streak, rising into a ridge, from which the blood started and trickled down his back. The poor fellow screamed in agony. After him a boy was stretched up in the same way. At the first lash, with a dreadful scream, he jerked his feet out of the ropes, and seemed to fly up to the top of the post. He was brought back and secured, and whipped until the alcalde was satisfied. This was one of the reforms instituted by the Central Government of Guatemala. The Liberal Party had abolished this remnant of barbarity; but within the last month, at the wish of the Indians themselves, and in pursuance of the general plan to restore old usages and customs, new whipping-posts had been erected in all the villages."

lege of playing a part in the village fiesta, was prized beyond all earthly honors, just as the loss of a part for drunkenness or some other naughtiness was a disgrace and a calamity. The power thus given into the hands of the friars was very great. The cofradías, needless to say, took their responsibilities with the utmost seriousness, and the plays were put on with considerable skill and originality. So thoroughly did the village play become an integral part of community life that even today, when there is not a friar in all Mexico, every self-respecting village has its special fiesta, managed and staged by its cofradía, playing such venerable mysteries as the Battle of the Moors and Christians, in which angels, devils, Moors, Christian knights, St. James, Hernán Cortés, Alexander the Great, Pharaoh, and Julius Caesar take part, in fine disregard of the unities.

Thus, when Father Alonso Ponce, Commissary of the Franciscan order, visited the convent town of Tlajomulco (Jalisco), on January 6, 1587, the cofradía put on the Coming of the Magi. Even at that early date it was the traditional fiesta of Tlajomulco, and Indians and Spaniards came from many miles round about to see it. It was, and is, so typical of the Indians' beloved fiestas that I am including the description of it recorded by Father Ponce's secretary.

"For a long time past the Indians of Tlajomulco have had the custom of acting out the coming of the Magi, just as our Holy Mother Church teaches us that it happened.... Against the tower of the church, near the door, they had built the gate of Bethlehem, and in it they had placed the Child and the Mother and Saint Joseph. The gate was a poor affair made of sticks, woven together with twigs and covered with a kind of moss which grows in that country. ...At one side of the court, somewhat removed from the gate, was a shelter made of green branches, in which Herod was seated, together with a large company, in great majesty and dignity.

"The Magi descended on horseback from the summit of a high hill near the town, riding very slowly, not only to preserve their dignity, but also because the hill was very high and the way was very rough. It took them almost two hours to come down to the church. Before them walked an Indian carrying a banner, and behind him another, an old man of over eighty, with a basket on his back full of offerings for the Child. And, while they descended, a band of angels came out and danced before the gate, singing verses in the Mexican language and making many reverences and genuflections to the Child. Then appeared a band of shepherds, each with his pouch and a pumpkin and other things, and his crook and implements of his trade, all very poor. While they were in the court an angel appeared from a little wooden tower and sang *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, at the sound of which the shepherds fell to the ground as if stricken senseless. But the angel comforted them and told them the news of the birth of the Child, at which they all got up and ran to the gate with great rejoicing and merriment, and offered the Child what they had: one a kid, another a lamb, a third bread, a fourth a mantle, and others other things, and all this they did with such reverence that they inspired great piety among the onlookers.

"And then they began to dance and sing, telling each other what they had heard and seen, and repeating the words of the angel over and over again, saying '*Goria! Goria! Goria!*', jumping up and down the while and waving their crooks with great contentment and pleasure. And then they set to wrestling, and when two of them were thrown to the ground they rolled over and over, tightly embraced, so quickly that every one was astonished and pleased.... After this had been going on for a long time two shepherds came with their crooks and stopped them, and the director ordered them to be gone. Finally, when the shepherds saw the Magi approaching, they joined hands and made a circle, leaving some loose inside it, who with their crooks chased the others and knocked down whom-ever they caught and rolled them from one side of the court to the other. And with this [that part of] the play came to an end, and truly it was worthy to be seen.

"The Magi were guided to the entrance of the court by a tinsel star, which ran on two ropes from the top of the hill to the church tower. At intervals high wooden towers had been erected, from which Indians pushed the star along on the ropes. When the Magi reached the entrance the star disappeared into one of the towers. Then they sent a messenger to Herod, begging permission to enter, and they dismounted and came before him. Then they asked him where the Child was, and Herod called his soothsayers, who at his command brought a great book and searched in it for a prophecy. But when they found it and read it to the king he became very angry and seized the book and threw it to the ground, and then ordered another of his wise men to pick it up and read the prophecy again. The poor wretch got down on his knees, confused and trembling, and turned the leaves until he had found the prophecy, and he showed it to Herod. [This business is repeated many times, until Herod gives up in a tantrum.]

"The Magi left the presence of Herod and, guided by the star, which emerged from the tower, came to the gate of Bethlehem. There they prostrated themselves before the Child and offered Him their gifts, which were several silver vases, and each one knelt down and recited a short prayer in the Mexican tongue. The old Indian who carried the gifts (and who, as the Father Commissary was told, had been playing that part for more than thirty years) put down his basket and made Him a speech, saying that for his part he had nothing to offer save his labor and suffering. Thereupon the angel again appeared from the little tower and told the Magi to return to their own country, and so they left and the play came to an end. Ten or twelve friars attended this fiesta, and many Spanish laymen, and more than five thousand Indians, who came from that parish and other towns, because every one in that province comes to it."

From a careful reading of the journal of Father Ponce's tour of inspection (he visited every Franciscan establishment in Mexico and Guatemala between 1584 and 1587), it is evident that a very large part of the native population of New Spain was directed, in its social and religious life, by the Franciscan friars. The veneration in which the friars were held was manifested in every village through which Father Ponce passed. On September 13, 1584, he was approaching the town of Jalapa.

"For two leagues before [we arrived]," recorded his secretary, "the way was covered with arches made of branches and leaves, after the fashion of the triumphal arches of Spain, and at each arch there were many different kinds of music—trumpets, flutes, *chirimías*, and other instruments—until we reached the town, where for half a league it was a sight to make one praise the Lord to see all the people, men and women, great and small, come forth in a procession and kneel down to beg the blessing of the Father Commissary."

Every day of the two weeks' journey from Vera Cruz to Mexico City there was a new celebration, with music, dancing, and feasting. The same thing happened in each of the convent towns in every part of New Spain visited by Father Ponce. His secretary was in a state of continual amazement at the piety of the Indians, the excellence of the music and dancing, and the lavishness of the entertainment. He never tired of cataloguing the abundance of native and imported fruits and other produce. "There are in that province many wide valleys and plains, where there are great pastures for cattle and sheep, which have so multiplied that they seem to be native to the country. There is hardly an Indian town where there is not a slaughter-house for beef for the natives. An infinite number of cattle are killed and [their meat] is very cheap. . . ." The secretary noticed such Castilian fruits as oranges, lemons, walnuts, apples, quinces, several varieties of peaches, damson plums, apricots, pears, figs, plums, and cherries, in addition to "a great abundance of vegetables," black grapes, olives, and plantains. All these fruits were evidently lavished upon travelers, particularly upon the friars. Thomas Gage, an English Dominican who, some forty years later, followed the same route as Father Ponce, has left a charming picture of his reception by the Indians.

"The first Indians we met with was at Old Vera Cruz, a town seated by the seaside. Here we began to discover the power of the priests and friars over the poor Indians, and their subjection and obedience unto them. For two miles before we came to the town there met us on horseback some twenty of the chief men of the town, presenting unto every one of us a nosegay of flowers, who rid before us a bowshot, till we were met with more company on foot, to wit, the trumpeters, the waits (who sounded pleasantly all the way before us), the officers of the church..., though more in number on account of the many sodalities or confraternities of saints whom they serve; these likewise presented unto each of us a nosegay; next met us the singing men and boys, all the quiristers, who sang softly and leisurely walked before us singing *Te Deum Laudamus*, till we came to the midst of the town, where there were two great elm trees, the chief marketplace. There was set up one long arbour with green bows and a table ready furnished with boxes of conserves and other sweetmeats, and diet-bread to prepare our stomachs for a cup of chocolate, which while it was seasoning with hot water and sugar, the chief Indians and officers of the town made a speech unto us, having first kneeled down to kiss our hands one by one. They welcomed us into their country, calling us Apostles of Jesus Christ, thanked us for that we had left our own country, our friends, our fathers and mothers, to save their souls. They told us they honored us as gods upon earth, and many such compliments they used until our chocolate was brought....

"And thus we took our leaves, giving unto the chief of them, some beads, some medals, some crosses of brass, some *Agnus Dei*, some reliques brought from Spain, and to every one of the town an indulgence for forty years.... Wherewith we began to blind that simple people with ignorant, erroneous, and Popish principles. As we went out of the arbour to take our mules, behold the marketplace was full of Indians, men and women, who as they saw us ready to depart, kneeled upon the ground, as adoring us, for a blessing, which as we rid along we bestowed upon them with lifted up hands on high, making over them the sign of the cross." [2]

The first company of Dominicans, under Fray Tomás Ortiz, did not get under way until the beginning of 1526, and then ran into a great deal of hard luck. In the first place, Ortiz was not the sort of leader to inspire in his men that spirit of happy sacrifice which was essential to a successful mission. He shared with the heads of his order their gloomy forebodings of disaster in New Spain. He was convinced that Cortés was a scoundrel, and he managed to impose his conviction upon Luis Ponce de León, the royal visitor, who was on his ship. When they reached Santo Domingo a fresh crop of rumors from New Spain confirmed Ortiz' forebodings, and he decided to stay there a while. When the company finally arrived at Vera Cruz in May, 1526, most of the men were ill from the long voyage and bad food, and four of them died soon after reaching the capital. After a few weeks Ortiz, on the pretext of having to return to Spain to recruit his forces, shook the dust of New Spain off his sandals and embarked with four of the remaining friars, three of whom died on the way across. Thus the first Dominican mission was left with one friar and one lay brother. But that friar, Domingo de Betanzos, was a whole mission in himself. In him piety, austerity, and humanity were so great and so nicely proportioned that he became a mighty peacemaker in the evil days after Cortés had slipped his leash. His unwearying tact and mediation more than once averted open civil war between the factions which were tearing New Spain to bits.

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[2] The reader should be warned that Gage turned Anglican after returning to England, and was writing propaganda for Cromwell's "Western Design." Gage bought immunity for himself by denouncing Jesuits to the civil authorities. He was, in short, a somewhat unsavory character, but his book, *The English American*, or *A New Survey of the West-Indies*, is one of the most entertaining travel books ever written, if one allows for the underlying malice of the author.

Pedro de Alvarado had known Betanzos in Santo Domingo before the Conquest. He now persuaded him to undertake a mission to Guatemala. Betanzos accepted, but refused to go in Alvarado's company, because his conscience would not permit him the luxury of riding a horse. Instead, he walked the thousand miles with one companion. The year following (1530) he walked all the way back again. Summoned to Spain for consultation about the organization of the Dominican province in New Spain, he walked to Vera Cruz, and from Spain he walked to Rome and back. In 1535 he brought a large company of Dominicans to New Spain and spent the rest of his useful life there, doing good to all men. Such a life would not be complete without a miracle. On his way across the Atlantic in 1535 his ship was caught in a violent storm, in the course of which it was driven directly at a great rock. When the ship was about to strike and all hands had given themselves up for lost, the rock opened and let it through.

The Dominican mission to New Spain finally got started in 1528, when Fray Vicente de Santa María brought in a company of twenty-four friars. The ground had already been broken and methods devised by the Franciscans. The Dominicans followed the same general lines, tapping territory not yet served by the Franciscans and sharing in the tremendous task of converting the Indians. Some notion of the size of that task may be had from the statement of Father Motolonía, who estimated that in the first fifteen years of work *no less than nine million Indians had been baptized*—a figure which is to be interpreted as meaning a very large number, for the piety of the early missionaries did not extend to accuracy in arithmetic.

Such a prodigious expenditure of energy was bound to be followed by a period of relaxation, of emotional fatigue. Besides, the missionaries had done their work so thoroughly that they soon found themselves with time on their hands. A spirit of emulation and even of rivalry developed between the orders, a spirit which was not always confined to the business of saving souls. It was not long before they were building convents and churches on a scale far beyond reasonable necessity. The smaller orders which came later were not to be outdone, and the result was that, before many years had passed, New Spain was crowded with ecclesiastical edifices, the splendor of which caused a great deal of acid comment about the hard life of the friars. As early as 1531 the convent being erected by the Dominicans in the capital caused such a scandal by its sumptuousness that the friars were severely reprimanded by the queen herself. The enormous mass of the Augustinian convent at Acolman, the rich and beautiful convent church of the Jesuits at Tepozotlán, the Byzantine luxury of the Mercedarian convent at Mexico City, the ruined but magnificent Franciscan church at Tlamanalco, and many comparable buildings, all testify to other motives than a humble devotion to converting the heathen. By 1596, according to Father Mendieta, there were churches in the four hundred convent towns of New Spain, and an equal number in the secular parishes, not counting the thousands of chapels in the smaller villages, the so-called *pueblos de visita*, served by circuit-riding priests and friars.

This immense amount of construction, however, should not be ascribed only to perverse extravagance on the part of friars and priests. They brought to the New World the Renaissance tradition of sumptuousness—the more beautiful the church the greater glory to God, and the greater credit to themselves. But in some cases their love of ostentation got out of hand rather badly. In 1556 Archbishop Alonso de Montúfar of Mexico, himself a Dominican, but a severe and courageous servant of Philip II, censured the friars in a letter to the Council of the Indies.

"The excessive costs and expenditures and personal services," he wrote, "and the sumptuous and superfluous works which the religious are erecting in the Indian villages at the Indians' expense, should be remedied. With respect to the monasteries, in some places they are so grandiose that, although they are designed to accommodate not more than two or three friars, they would more than suffice for Valladolid. When a house is completed and another friar moves in and takes a notion to demolish it and remove it elsewhere, he does so. It is nothing for a religious to begin a new work costing ten or twelve thousand ducats, ... and bring Indians to work on it in gangs of five hundred, six hundred, or a thousand, from a distance of four, six, or twelve leagues, without paying them any wages, or even giving them a crust of bread....

"The personal service of the Indians in the monasteries is very excessive—gardeners, doorkeepers, cleaners, cooks, sacristans, messengers, all without a cent of wages. There is a very large number of cantors in the service of the Church; in one monastery we found a hundred and twenty Indians serving as cantors, without counting the sacristans and acolytes and players [of musical instruments].... And, since all the cost of such works and the rich and superfluous ornaments is met by assessing these poor people, the caciques and head men, who are supposed to take out a hundred ducats from the community treasury, take out a thousand for themselves. No one knows this better than the friars themselves, who have told me that the caciques and head men wish the friars to ask them for money, so that they may with this pretext make an assessment for themselves."

One would think that the Indians would have been the first to resent such exploitation. There are, to be sure, occasional suits in the papers of the General Indian Court which indicate that the Indians were not always the cheerful givers of their time and money, but by and large they seem to have served willingly enough. They were intensely loyal to the order under whose rule they happened to be, and they participated wholeheartedly in the rows and rivalries which disturbed the City of God. Father Ponce's secretary gleefully described the case of the Indians of San Juan Teotihuacán, "all the people [of which] are very devoted to our Order.... The Royal Audiencia of Mexico wished to assign the doctrina of this town to the religious of another order, although the Indians did not like them and resisted for a long time.... At length the Audiencia sent a justice to put the said religious in possession of the doctrina, and, when he arrived and saw the resistance of the Indians he had a gallows set up, and he arrested the chief men of the town and had them brought in chains to the gallows, giving them to understand that they were to be hanged. But with great courage they allowed themselves to be brought to the gallows, believing that they were truly to be hanged, and they knelt down and began to recite that antiphony of St. Francis, which begins *Sancte Francisce prospera*, etc. And when the justice and the religious saw this they were confounded and gave up the attempt."

In 1559, at the very beginning of the crown's long struggle to secularize the Indian parishes, Archbishop Montúfar got a taste of the Franciscans' power over the Indians. The friars, he complained to the Council of the Indies, were inciting the Indians to riot against the secular priests and drive them out of the villages.

On another occasion, in 1569, the feud between the Franciscans and the secular clergy threatened to end in a genuine rebellion. The friars of the convent of San José in Mexico City had been in the habit of going in a procession, with a large following of Indians, to celebrate the yearly feast of the Virgin at the church of Santa María la Redonda. This time they were met by a group of seculars, who ordered them back to their convent. The friars stood their ground and argued the point. Words led to blows, and the Indian partisans of the friars took the matter in their own hands and showered their adversaries with stones. The riot brought out the citizenry, who attempted to mediate, but the Indians put them to flight likewise. The viceroy, Don Martín Enríquez, finally had to send troops and arrest the Indian leaders, whereupon the rest of the Indians, egged on by the friars, it was charged, flocked to the jail and demanded to be imprisoned along with their leaders, saying they were all equally guilty. The viceroy prudently released the leaders, and the friars won out.

The most serious difficulty in the way of exercising any effective control over the orders lay in their quasi-feudal nature, as well as in the extraordinary powers granted to them by the papacy. The crown was fully aware of the anomaly and attempted to curb their power by limiting their tenure to ten years. At the end of that time the Indians were presumed to be sufficiently indoctrinated to be able to get along with the services of ordinary priests, and the native parishes would then become part of the Spanish church-state structure. Needless to say, the friars fought tooth and nail whenever secularization was mentioned. They argued, with plenty of reason, that ten years were too short a period of preparation and that their neophytes, if placed in the hands of "hirelings," would promptly revert to paganism. One would be inclined to give their argument more weight if they had not kept repeating it for a hundred years.

It was not until 1640 that the crown found a man equipped to beat the friars at their own game. This was Don Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, Bishop of Puebla, who was sent to New Spain as visitor general, with instructions to clean up the secularization business once and for all. Palafox was an extraordinary man by any standard. He combined immense energy and learning with a completely unyielding character and an equally complete devotion to the interests of the crown. He wasted no time in argument, but turned the friars out of their jobs overnight. They sent the expected lobby to Spain with a portfolio of charges against the highhanded bishop, but their magic no longer worked, and Palafox was sustained by the Council of the Indies.

Palafox is most famous for the civil war which raged for ten years between him and the Jesuits of New Spain—a war in which both sides displayed a crushing erudition. Palafox was finally beaten and recalled to Spain, but in his fight he had achieved such popularity that his journey to Vera Cruz was a triumphal procession. His path was literally blocked by the enormous crowds that gathered to cheer him. In Spain he was speedily vindicated. He devoted the remaining years of his life to publishing his works, which fill twelve huge tomes, and after his death missed canonization only through the weakness of Charles II and the opposition of the Jesuits.

The fierce resistance of the friars to secularization of their parishes leads one to make a few speculations regarding their motives. (1) They were genuinely convinced that the seculars could not hold the Indians, or (2) they never considered the Indians capable of education and expected to keep them in perpetual tutelage, or (3) they had failed in their task of conversion, or (4) they had got fat with ease, wealth, and idleness, and worldy considerations had more to do with the case than they ever admitted. However it was, life in the convents of the metropolitan area became scandalously free and easy. The Franciscan convent at Lake Xochimilco was a delightful place, where Viceroy the Marqués de Villamanrique and his court loved to frolic. Father Ponce was profoundly shocked at such looseness, but, when he threatened to do something about it, the viceroy banished him from the capital.

It would be the height of injustice to conclude that piety and decency had vanished among the friars. When the fight against Satan had been won and the more serious friars found themselves with time on their hands, they devoted themselves to several useful occupations. For instance, Fray Francisco Tembleque, a Franciscan, drew the plans and supervised the construction of the great aqueduct of Zempoala, which he finished in 1571, after seventeen years of work. It is still one of the sights of Mexico. It is also pleasantly ironical that the men whose pious frenzy had caused them to destroy everything that suggested heathenish beliefs were the very ones who in later years did their utmost to preserve the art, literature, history, and folk lore of the pre-Conquest civilizations. Without the painstaking work of Toribio de Benavente (Motolonía), Bernardino de Sahagún, Jerónimo de Mendieta, Antonio Tello, Juan de Torquemada, and a number of others, our knowledge of early Mexico would be pretty much of a blank.

From time to time the opening of new fields for missionary work stirred something of the ancient fire. The missions of New Mexico, Arizona, Sonora, and the two Californias were as heroic as anything undertaken in the early days. But in the great central area, after secularization, convent life drifted into a comfortable routine—which meant that the friars' work was done. It loses none of its significance, however, on that account. If it is true that today, for better or for worse, the great majority of the

Mexican people are loyal to the Catholic Church and show no disposition to give it up in favor of some more modern form of state worship, the credit or blame goes to the stout friars of four hundred years ago who so thoroughly captured their love and imagination.

Chapter IX

TOWNS, SPANISH AND INDIAN

There is little need to dwell upon the obvious fact that the various emigrating peoples of Europe brought their patterns of life with them to America. New England became a piece of Old England, New France a piece of Old France, and New Spain became, as nearly as the settlers could make it, a replica of Old Spain. It is very pertinent to our quest to discover what notions of town-planning the Spaniards brought with them and what sort of society they had in mind to set up in New Spain.

To do so we must go back to Spain for a bit. The Spanish village or town (*comunidad*) is so ancient that its origin is lost in antiquity. The Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Romans found the Spaniards living in organized communities. These communities included the village proper and all the lands which were used for its support. The Spanish comunidad may be thought of as a sort of social insurance society, whose fundamental reason for being was defense and the assurance of an adequate food supply. In a great part of Spain subsistence has always been precarious. The scanty and variable rainfall, the thin soil with its poor crops, and the hard winters force the people to lead very frugal lives and to save their meager surpluses against a rainy day. This necessity brought about community enterprise, because only by pooling resources could the safety of the village be assured. The public granaries (*alhóndigas*) of Spain are the visible symbols of collective life.

The necessity of providing against a rainy day required a working political organization. In the Spanish community a government was devised which is still fundamentally unchanged from pre-Roman times. The legislative and judicial body of the village was a council (*cabildo*) of elders called *regidores*. The regidores appointed the mayor or mayors (*alcaldes*), the constables (*alguaciles*), and themselves served as a court of justice. The citizens (*vecinos*) of the community tilled their plots by themselves, but the harvesting and threshing were generally the work of the whole village. Each village had a common threshing floor (*area*) where the wheat was threshed (as it is still threshed in many places) by driving cattle over it, or by flailing. The community had a common pasture (*ejido*) and a common wood (*monte*).

The community was welded into a unit, not only by the practical necessity of assuring the food supply and of defense, but by an intensely local religion and patriotism which approached the fanatical. The most powerful figure in the village was the priest, long before Christianity was thought of. He was the medicine man, in charge of propitiating the fickle deities of rain and generation, and he was the sage who was consulted in all affairs of state. Not the least of his duties was to lead his people in war, not as a military commander, perhaps, but as a spiritual tub-thumper. The fierce Spanish priests were the centers of resistance in the early invasions of Spain, and they spurred their followers on to unheard-of sacrifices. In the siege of Numantia by Scipio Africanus in 133 B.C., the last of the defenders are said to have thrown themselves into the flames of their burning town rather than yield to the Romans. The early Spanish priest seems to have been a close kin to the North African *marabout*, that wild ascetic who from time to time has led the Moslem world in its religious wars.

The six hundred years of the Roman rule altered somewhat the primitive structure of the Spanish community by removing its political functions. It was expanded into the Roman *municipium* and became one of the administrative cells which made up the empire. The acceptance of Christianity was slow in Spain. When it was finally adopted it resembled the ancient local religion. The Christian priest was still the priest of the community, and the Christian Church in Spain was first of all a Spanish church. The intense vitality of the Spanish community made it survive the many centuries of the Moorish-Arabic domination. A great part of the population remained to live under the Moslems; in manners, speech, and dress the Spaniards became Moslem, but their religion continued to be a primitive Christianity, and their community did not change.

In the long process of reabsorption known as the Reconquest, the Spanish communities were so powerful that they were courted and respected by the Spanish rulers and were taken intact into the growing Spanish nation. They frequently, in fact, assumed independence, and, in powerful unions known as *hermandades*, imposed their will upon feudal lord and monarch alike.

The Spaniard, then, was by ancient tradition a town-dweller. His loyalty was to his community, the members of which were bound together by ties stronger than blood. He was proud, but his greatest pride was in being a *vecino*, a member of his community. His town, or at most his province, was his *patria*, which he loved (and loves) with an astonishing strength.

And so it was that when the Spaniards came to the New World their first act was to organize themselves into communities. The municipal corporation was the recognized source of authority, outside that of the crown. When Hernán Cortés illegally undertook the conquest of Mexico he organized the municipality of Vera Cruz, which elected him governor and captain-general and gave him sufficient legality to justify himself before the crown (aided by a thumping gift to the emperor). The Spanish community revolutionized the political structure of the New World, and an understanding of its working is necessary to our understanding of Mexico.

One of the lieutenants of Cortés, Diego de Mazariegos, had been given the assignment of "pacifying" the province of Chiapa. When it was completed he returned to the capital to resume his duties as regidor of the city. But the Indians of Chiapa did not stay pacified, and the work had to be done all over again. So Mazariegos assembled a new company in 1527 and, with arms supplied by Cortés, again went south. This time he decided to settle the country permanently, and he brought along a number of Spaniards and Aztec "friends" for the purpose. The Indians of Chiapa put up a game resistance, fortifying themselves, as was their inveterate habit, on the heights, from which many jumped off to their death rather than surrender. The survivors were magnanimously treated by Mazariegos. Instead of branding them as slaves (the common fate of Indian "rebels") he settled them in a village, Chiapa de los Indios on the Grijalva River. Once the military business was over, Mazariegos set about establishing his new town.

According to Antonio de Remesal, the early historian of the province, quoting the lost minutes of the cabildo, on March 1, 1528, "Captain Mazariegos brought together in his house all the chiefs of his army and spoke to them. He told them that his aim in founding a town there was to conserve what they had won with such hardship. He said that he had not chosen that as a permanent site, but that it was to serve only until a better one could be located.... But [he said], whether they remained there or removed elsewhere,... he was naming it Villareal, so that he might be reminded of his *patria*, Ciudad Real, in Spain.

"Then he named as its first alcaldes Luis de Luna and Pedro de Orozco, and he delivered to them their staves of justice, under a solemn oath that they would perform their duties well and faithfully, always bearing in mind the service of God Our Lord and that of his Majesty, and the common good."

Mazariegos also named six councilmen (*regidores*), a major-domo (treasurer) of the *villa*, and an attorney (*procurador*). "And on the sixth day of March [1528]...all the aforesaid alcaldes, regidores, and other officers met in the house of Captain Diego de Mazariegos to receive possession of their offices. Then they made a schedule of the salaries of the chief constable (*alguacil mayor*) and his assistant, and those of the jailor and town crier, and they delivered to the alguacil mayor five pairs of handcuffs and some leg irons.... They also ordered the said alguacil mayor to erect in the square a wooden stock and to place on the hill at the entrance of the town...a wooden gallows for the execution of justice."

The cabildo further enacted that all persons who desired to remain there and become vecinos of the new villa should enter their names in the book of the cabildo, "and they would be received, and they would enjoy the privileges and liberties which are...enjoyed by the citizens of the other villas and cities of this New Spain, and those who did not desire to become vecinos would not enjoy them."

About eighty men entered their names in the book of the cabildo. "After this important act had been completed, without which the community and republic would have no existence," Mazariegos brought the officers and vecinos of the new "republic" to a site he had discovered, some two and a half leagues east of the Indian town of Zinacatán. And there, "in the presence of me, the said secretary, and of the council of the said Villareal, they said that although the villa had been founded and first located in the province of Chiapa, because at that time the territory had not been reconnoitered..., the captain and the regidores had decided to change, because the former site was in the hot country, where there were many marshes and mosquitoes. The present site had been chosen because it had all the necessary qualities: it was in a cold country; there was an abundance of good water, pasture, and dry land, and land for cattle, woods, etc."

One reason given for the selection of the site was that the villa could be located there without harm to the Indians. The removal was duly authorized by a vote of the cabildo, and the new villa was marked out with a square, sites for a church, a town hall, and the houses of the governor and principal vecinos. The Indian "friends" were put to work erecting houses; the indispensable stocks and gallows were reinstalled; and Villareal was a fact. "All of which, as described above, they commanded me, the said secretary, to put in this book of the cabildo, and they signed it with their names."

For the next month the new vecinos were busy laying out streets and locating building lots. Which done, on April 24, 1528, they met with the cabildo and were officially given possession of their lots. The matter of allocating agricultural land had still to be done, but the founding of Villareal had first to be confirmed by the Audiencia in Mexico City. Then, "on August 22, they began to mark out the land in *caballerías* and *peonerías*. A caballería was the estate given to him who had supplied a horse during the war; it was six hundred feet long and three hundred feet wide. A peonería was that given to a foot-soldier; it was three hundred feet long and fifty feet wide."

Such was the story of the founding of the charming old town now known as San Cristóbal de las Casas, in the state of Chiapas, which for centuries was the center of Spanish culture for the region between Oaxaca and Guatemala. Most of the graceful Spanish towns which are the pride of Mexico had a similar origin.

In one respect the Spanish town in America was different from its prototype. Every such municipality in New Spain had a native quarter (*barrio*), from which mechanical and domestic service could be drawn. In Villareal the

Aztec and Tlaxcaltecan "friends" were settled in such a quarter. But so many of them had fallen in the campaign, or had succumbed to the hardship of carrying supplies, that the population of the native quarter was not large enough to meet the needs of the town. So the cabildo petitioned the Audiencia of Mexico in 1537 to "beg his Majesty to command that up to two hundred Indians, with their wives, come to this country and settle near this villa, *provided that they come from the land of Mexico*, and we will give them very good lots on which to live and pursue their trades and commerce, because it will be of great assistance in the peopling and maintenance of this villa and the pacification of the country. *This is what has been done in Guatemala and in other Christian* [Spanish] *towns* of this New Spain, and it will be a good thing here." (Emphasis supplied.)

It should be mentioned again that wherever the Spaniards went, in military conquests or for the purpose of founding towns, or both, they were invariably accompanied by considerable bodies of Indians from the plateau, who were as useful to the Spaniards as they were destructive of the country where they were brought. Wherever the Spaniards settled, their Mexican friends settled with them and became an important cultural nucleus in that territory. It might even be argued that, with the help of the Spaniards, the Aztecs continued their interrupted conquest of Mexico and Central America. From Sonora to Nicaragua the map is studded with Aztec place names, reminders of the Mexican "friends" who passed that way. Some of these Aztec barrios, such as Escuintla in Guatemala and San Esteban de Tlaxcala in Coahuila, preserved their identity until very recent times.

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After what has been said of the town-dwelling habits of the Spaniards, it should be apparent that they considered their kind of community life as the normal and proper pattern of society, not only for themselves, but for the Indians as well. In New Spain they found a number of well-organized, advanced Indian communities, which struck them as worthy of the privilege of self-government. The second Audiencia gave them essentially the same status as Spanish towns. Let me hasten to add at this point, lest the reader jump to the conclusion that the millennium had been reached, that Indian rule turned out to be no whit less corrupt than Spanish rule. The records of the General Indian Court are crowded with suits brought against Indian officers for all the usual charges of graft, extortion, nepotism, and general cussedness. Bishop Abad y Queipo of Michoacán, describing native rule after two centuries of it, wrote to the Council of the Indies:

"The Indians govern themselves, and all the [local] magistrates are of the copper-colored race. In each village there are eight or ten old Indians, who live at the expense of the rest in absolute idleness, basing their authority either upon their claim to an illustrious birth, or upon political trickery which has become hereditary. These chiefs have a great interest in keeping their fellow citizens in the most profound ignorance, and thus they contribute more than anyone to the perpetuation of the prejudices, ignorance, and barbarism of ancient habits."

Nevertheless, it was political wisdom on the part of the Spaniards to interfere as little as possible with native hierarchies and customs, and it made for successful government. There were other factors in that success, of course, such as the immense influence of the religious orders. The wisdom of the Spanish policy is indicated by one startling fact, that *by the end of the sixteenth century there was no regular military establishment in all New Spain south of the Chichimeca frontier* (roughly, the line of the barrancas of the Santiago and the Moctezuma). By way of contrast, Mexico today (1941) maintains garrisons in every part of the Republic—a standing army of 62,000.

In the sixteenth century—to get back to our story—a considerable part of the native population lived in scattered hamlets and isolated clumps of houses called *rancherías*, in every nook and cranny of the country, wherever a few square yards of ground offered a root-hold for maize. Such odd corners had the additional advantage of enabling the Indians to evade the tribute collector and the *mandón* in charge of rounding up labor gangs.

The problem of administering these inaccessible communities had been recognized from the earliest times. The Laws of Burgos of 1512 attempted a solution by ordering the concentration of the Indians in towns, where, by observing the habits of the Spaniards, they might be induced to live in an orderly manner and adopt a Christian way of life. No humor was intended. When the Spanish conquerors accepted encomiendas in New Spain one of the obligations they assumed was the settlement of the Indians in towns. But the indifference of the Spaniards and the cost of building, as well as the natural resistance to change on the part of the Indians, made the process slow. The Council of the Indies, however, had no intention of relinquishing the project of making town-dwelling and tax-paying citizens of the Indians. Between 1546 and 1574, after the civil administration had been firmly established (that is, when most of the old conquerors were dead or past active resistance), the Council decided to complete the concentration of the scattered Indian population.

In 1584 Viceroy (and also Archbishop and Inquisitor) Pedro Moya de Contreras was so instructed by the Council. But Moya de Contreras was a wise and humane man. He knew the cost in suffering that the concentration *(congregación)* was bound to inflict on the Indians, and, using the ancient prerogative of Spanish officials, he "obeyed but did not fulfill" his instruction.

In 1590 Luis de Velasco II (son of the great viceroy of the same name) was sent over with the same instructions regarding the congregation of the Indians. Velasco (who otherwise was an intelligent and able ruler) in this instance failed to visualize the magnitude of the task or the vast organization necessary for its success. The result was that the men whom he commissioned to congregate the Indians acted without preparation and with great severity, uprooting populations and moving them about with little regard for their welfare. Confusion and suffering followed them like a plague. Many Indians were said to have died from starvation and exposure. One critic (Fray Juan de Torquemada) even went to the length of charging that Velasco undertook the congregation in the rainy season for that very purpose. Velasco was no such monster, but the effect was the same. Many of his congregations had to be abandoned for lack of subsistence.

It was not until 1598 that a man of the requisite administrative ability was put in charge of the work, Viceroy the Conde de Monterrey. Philip II and the Council were getting impatient over the interminable delay, and Monterrey was given peremptory instructions to complete the congregation forthwith. He gave the difficult project his full attention. The congregation was, in effect, a political and economic revolution for a considerable part of the Indian population. Since it clearly reveals the whole Spanish scheme of government, and explains the present structure of the Mexican community, it is of interest to go into it in some detail.

The preamble to the first law of Title III of the Laws of the Indies summarizes the matter. "We have always given our greatest care and attention to . . . the most convenient means of instructing the Indians in the Holy Catholic Faith and the evangelical law, in order to cause them to lay aside their ancient erroneous rites and ceremonies and to live in concert and order. To bring this about our Council of the

Indies has met several times with other religious persons, and the prelates of New Spain were called together in the year 1546 by order of the Emperor Charles V (of glorious memory); and they, with the desire of promoting the service of God, and ours, resolved that the Indians should be congregated in villages and not allowed to live scattered in mountains and wildernesses, where they are deprived of all spiritual comforts, the aid of our ministers, and those other things which human necessities oblige men to give one to another. Therefore,... the viceroys, presidents [of audiencias], and governors were charged and ordered to execute the congregation, settlement, and indoctrination of the Indians, using in this such kindness and gentleness that ... it will encourage [others] ... to come and offer themselves of their own free will.... And, because the above has already been put into effect in the greater part of our Indies, we order and command that it be carried out in all the rest...."

The ideal Indian village is then described. It was to be located where there was good land for cultivation, with a sufficiency of wood and water; it was to have at least a square league (six and a half square miles) of land, *which might not be alienated;* it was to have a public grazing ground *(ejido);* where practicable it was to be established near the mines, so that the Indians working there might have the same benefits as their fellows, and, the law should have added, where their labor would be available. The ideal village was meant to be a replica of the ancient Spanish community.

The political structure of the Indian village was defined in great detail. The church was to be the center of society; attendance at Mass was compulsory; the priest was to have an assistant, a sort of truant officer, with the duty of seeing that the Indians did not absent themselves from Mass; two or three cantors and a sexton were provided for each village, who were exempted from paying tribute and from personal services. Each village was to have one or more alcaldes and two or more regidores, to be elected each year, in the presence of the priest, "as is the practice in Spanish and in other Indian villages." The Indian alcaldes were given the power of arresting and investigating; they might inflict punishment to the extent of one day's imprisonment and six to eight lashes for drunkenness and absence from Mass; graver offenses were to be turned over to the nearest Spanish authority; the alcaldes had the power to arrest and detain in jail Negroes and *mestizos,* but their punishment was reserved for the Spanish magistrates. In order to assure the permanence of the congregation, removal to another village was prohibited.

Cattle farms *(estancias)* could not be located within a league and a half of any Indian village; sheep farms, half a league. The Indians were allowed to kill any cattle that invaded their lands.

Spaniards, Negroes, mestizos, and mulattos were forbidden to dwell in Indian villages; travelers might remain overnight, and merchants three days; but none of these might lodge with the Indians, unless no inn was available. All supplies were to be paid for in cash and might not be taken by force. Even the overseers of the encomiendas might not remain in the villages without special permission of the Audiencia or of the Spanish governor of the province.

Such, in general, was the political structure set up for the Indian villages, whether congregations or other communities. Unlike a good part of the Spanish legislation for the Indians, it was based on reality. It transferred to the New World the ancient concept of the Spanish comunidad. It altered very slightly the traditional pattern of Indian life, and it functioned with considerable success. *It is the political structure of the Mexican village today*, with some modification due to changes in the superior government.

To return to our congregations—the Conde de Monterrey appointed a large number of teams, each composed of a judge, an alguacil, and a notary. These teams were sent to all parts of New Spain to gather information regarding the number and location of the native settlements, and to make a survey of the established villages, with respect to the amount of productive land available, the water supply, communications, etc. The larger villages were to be increased to the point where they might support a priest and the regular civil officers.

The investigators worked a full year and brought back to the special Court of the Congregation a large body of information. For the next five years officers *(jueces de congregación)* were in all parts of New Spain, marking out new barrios and transferring people to them. They worked against the opposition of the encomenderos, the regular clergy, and, above all, of the Indians themselves. Denunciations, obstructive tactics, the flight of the Indians to the hills, lawsuits, and appeals to the Audiencia made the work slow and stopped it in many cases. Nevertheless, in that large part of New Spain lying south of the Chichimeca country an unknown but very large number of congregations were completed.

The hardships resulting from the dislocation of native life, and the inevitable mistakes and ineptitude of some of the officers gave critics of the congregation the opportunity of denouncing it as the heaviest affliction the Indians had ever suffered. But it is not safe to take such criticisms at their face value, even when they come from the pens of churchmen, for everybody was grinding an axe of some sort. The severest critic of the congregation was the Dominican, Fray Juan de Torquemada, and the axe he was grinding was the prevention of secularization of the Indian parishes. I have examined numbers of the fragmentary records of the great congregation of 1598-1605, and it seems to me from this distance that the officers in charge were as moderate and humane as the circumstances would allow.

It is true that a great many Indians were removed from their beloved milpas in odd corners and were forced into new and better quarters in the congregations, while they saw their old houses go up in smoke behind them, and they naturally did not like it. But the milpas were not destroyed. Even the expense of putting up new houses was credited to the tribute account of the village. In case there was not enough land available for the congregation, it was taken from the Spanish holdings in the neighborhood.

Pedro de Cervantes was the *juez de congregación* of the province of Tlanchinol (northern Hidalgo). His commission was to transfer the populations of eleven scattered rancherías to the four villages of Tenango, Tlalol, Lontla, and Coacuilco. In the eleven rancherías were 392 families (roughly, 2000 people). Cervantes had to lay out eleven new barrios, complete with streets, squares, and building lots. Three hundred and ninety-two houses had to be built, together with eleven *casas de comunidad* and eleven chapels (for each new barrio remained a self-governing entity), and the work had to be done without interfering with planting and harvesting. Cervantes was an admirable administrator. He organized the men of the eleven rancherías into squads of ten, each of which was given a particular task: clearing streets, staking out lots, carrying timber and building supplies, and the like, while squads of women took care of the commissary. By keeping everlastingly at it, with no force but his own authority, and by traveling on horseback from village to village, urging the laggards and threatening the unwilling, Cervantes completed the task in eight months. On February 4, 1605, he was able to report to the Court of the Congregation in Mexico City that the new communities were in their houses and were operating under their own officers. No lives had been lost and no active opposition had been experienced.

Whatever one may think of the wisdom or humanity of uprooting populations and moving them about according to some ideal scheme of government, the congregation of the Indians was necessary to complete the political organization of New Spain as it was then conceived. Numerous inaccessible parts of the country, to be sure, were left untouched, as they still are, but the thousands of congregaciones still listed in the Mexican census and the indelible Spanish stamp of the great majority of villages testify to the magnitude of the revolution wrought by the Spanish town-builders.

Chapter X

WORK IN UTOPIA

I

The story of work in New Spain impinges upon all other questions, because *every part of the economic structure depended in the end upon the labor of the Indians.* The Indians were not the only ones who worked, but they formed the great reservoir of labor without which society could not exist. In this and the following chapter I shall limit myself to a discussion of native labor and the various shifts to which the Spaniards were put in order to get necessary work done.

Few aspects of the Spanish régime have been the object of more furious denunciation than the treatment of the Indians. Abuse of the Indians was, with few exceptions, tied up with the matter of forced labor. The scowling conquistador lashing the naked and cringing Indian is the traditional picture and one that shows no sign of dying out. On the contrary, the excellent mural decorations which in the past twenty years have covered the walls of Mexico rarely omit it. The lesson to the spectator is that, no matter how bad things may be at present, they are infinitely to be preferred to the slavery of olden times. Like all such facile theses, however, deliberately propounded for indoctrination, this one contains a deal of bad thinking and misinformation. What has been done is to take the desperate plight of the Indians under the first century of the Republic and project it back into colonial times. It is obvious that the elaborate system of protection set up by the Laws of the Indies was evaded and annulled to a considerable extent by the local authorities, but the necessity of preserving the Indian population from extinction made the Audiencia more vigilant in enforcing the law than is commonly believed. In any case, no part of our survey of Mexico is more important or more necessary to understand than the story of work.

Necessary work always has to be done. In conquered countries, if the population is capable of exploitation, necessary work is always done by the conquered. That may not be sound ethics, but it is history. Our New England forebears tried to enslave the Pequot Indians of Connecticut and failed only because the Pequots would rather die than become slaves. The problem of necessary work had to be faced the moment Columbus founded the settlement of Isabella on the island of Española. The great discoverer, upon his return to Spain in 1493, wrote the Spanish monarchs a famous letter, which may be considered the first real estate prospectus of America.

"There are in that island," wrote Columbus, "mountains and valleys and fields, and beautiful fat lands for planting and sowing, for raising cattle of all kinds, for cities and villages. The ports are such as you would not believe unless you saw them, as are the many broad rivers of sweet waters, most of which are gold-bearing.... The people all go naked, as their mothers bore them, save only that some of the women cover a single part with a green leaf, or a cotton cloth made for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or arms, nor are they apt for such things, not because they are not well set up and beautiful, but because they are wonderfully timorous.... They are so guileless and so generous with what they possess that you would not believe it without seeing it."

Free rich land and a docile population waiting to be put to work! The appeal to the poverty-stricken and land-hungry soldiery of Spain was irresistible—the same soldiery that had lived on loot in the conquest of Granada and Naples and always found the loot too little. There were many thousands of these unemployed warriors in Spain at the close of the fifteenth century. Each was a nobleman in his own mind, for bearing arms was the calling of the nobility. For many centuries a whole class of society had had no trade but arms and no income but the spoils of the enemy. The Spanish crusader, who became the conquistador of the New World, was a hardy, brave, ruthless, and usually illiterate barbarian. The noble state, however, postulated land and retainers, and he had only his arms. Work? Everyone knows that in the great tradition of nobility useful work is degrading. The experience of Sir Walter Raleigh in Virginia will be recalled in this regard.

Small wonder, then, that Columbus had no difficulty in enlisting a regular army of these adventurers, some fifteen hundred of them, on his second expedition to the Garden of Eden. But one important item had been overlooked, namely, the food supply. In those days armies lived on the country, and Columbus anticipated no trouble in feeding his men in Española. Native economy, however, was not equal to the added burden. The Indians had got along well enough on a diet of manioc bread, sweet potatoes, fish, and what not, but they produced only what they consumed. The Spaniards ate all the food they could seize, and invaders and Indians were soon reduced to a state of permanent starvation. The problem of procuring food was immediate, and the situation was heavy with disaster. "Nothing in those days," wrote Las Casas, "gladdened the people here more than to learn that ships were coming with provisions from Castile, for all their sufferings were caused by hunger." Conditions became so hideous that in the next few years Española was all but abandoned and could be kept up only by sending over shiploads of convicts, *whose sentences of death were commuted into two years' service in the*

Indies. “Indeed,” wrote the historian Oviedo, “I saw many of those who at that time returned to Castile with such faces that I think that although the king had given me his Indies, were I to become as they, I should not have gone thither.” The necessity of procuring food, as I shall have occasion to repeat, was the greatest and most continuous modifying factor in the settlement of Spanish America.

Now, the cultivation of manioc is extremely laborious, although the yield is generous. The brush must be grubbed up, hillocks built, and the encroaching jungle must be fought back unceasingly. Then the tuberous roots must be dug up, grated, and the poisonous juice squeezed out—after which the flour is made into heavy flat cakes. In that first generation manioc bread was the staple food of the white man. It was such an important item in the Spanish Conquest that it is hardly too much to say that the New World was conquered on manioc.

The aversion of the Spanish conquistadores (and others) to manual labor in the tropics is notorious, and the new parasite class insisted on being fed and made rich. The labor problem was a simple one. What were the heathen for if not to work for their new masters? So the Indians of the Antilles were forced to plant manioc and wash gold, and were kept so unremittingly at it, and with so little regard for their strength and habits, that the greater part of the population died off in the first twenty years of the Spanish occupation. It was that frightful catastrophe which supplied the most harrowing details of Las Casas’ *Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies.* Conditions were so incredibly bad that it may be said that even Las Casas could not exaggerate them.

The Spaniards, however, had not been sent to the Indies merely to eat soggy manioc bread and drive the Indians to the gold pits. Back in the queen’s council were those who remembered that, by the terms of the papal bull which gave Spain the Indies, she had undertaken to make Christians of the natives. The paradox involved in saving the souls of the aborigines, while using their bodies for profit, agitated the legal minds of Spain for many years, and was solved only after the New Laws of 1542 had come perilously close to destroying the Spanish Empire.

In the Española of Columbus the matter was settled summarily by recourse to a proposition which may be somewhat badly stated as follows: "Is it not just to make the heathen work in exchange for the ineffable gifts of Christianity and the profit system?" Lest this proposition should shock the reader, let me add that one of the most persistent criticisms directed for centuries against the Indians was that they had no sense of values. They would not work for wages like a Christian, and they exchanged things of great price for things of little price. Their inferiority was manifest. All of which, of course, strikes one as the flimsiest sort of rationalization, but it served. Work had to be done in any case, and Columbus and his followers ground the helpless islanders in a deadly round of unceasing toil. When the despairing Indians resisted—well, in that case they were heathen rebels and could be enslaved. Columbus's project for establishing a trade in Indian slaves, as I have mentioned elsewhere, was stopped by Isabella herself. The fearful stories of barbarity which came back from the Antilles finally aroused the queen to the necessity of redeeming her pledge to the pope.

So out of starvation, slavery, and death came the first New Deal to America. It was entrusted to Don Nicolás de Ovando, Lord Commander of the military order of Calatrava, one of those extraordinary warrior-monks who had governed conquered Granada. In 1502 he was made governor of Española, with the mission of repairing the disastrous mismanagement of the Columbus brothers, to suppress Indian and Spanish rebels, and to restore order. The old commander was equal to the task. Within the year the Indians who were left alive had been thoroughly subdued, as well as those turbulent spirits among the Spaniards whom Columbus had so signally failed to control.

But Ovando, *like every governor sent to the Indies*, still had to face the problem of feeding the population, getting useful work done, and converting the Indians into Christians and Spanish subjects. It was he who introduced the much discussed and be-moaned system of encomiendas (trusteeships or guardianships), by which the conquered Moorish provinces in Spain had been administered. He divided the Indians into lots of varying size, depending upon the category of the recipient, and put them under the tutelage of presumably God-fearing and high-minded Spanish laymen. Some of the largest encomiendas were given to King Ferdinand and the men of his court. It is well to remember that this was long before the establishment of religious missions. The encomendero, in fact, was supposed to assume the obligations of a lay missionary, and at the same time act as a collector of the tribute and general overlord of the Indians. It was a quasi-feudal arrangement, the encomendero accepting the responsibility for the Indian's soul in the hereafter, and the Indian paying for the privilege by raising foodstuffs and washing gold, in lieu of cash tribute. *This legal fiction, by one name or another, was behind all measures by which the Indian was coerced into doing work*, within the law, that is.

To the conquistador of 1500 it was a reasonable and logical solution of the labor problem. He evidently looked upon the encomienda merely as a contrivance for avoiding the ugly name of slavery. The matter becomes clear in the light of his action after the population had become too scanty to support him. Slaving expeditions to the Bahamas and other "useless" islands, that is, those where no gold was to be found, grew to a profitable traffic. One of these expeditions, under Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, led to the discovery of New Spain in 1517. The ill-defined status of the encomienda Indians made their lot worse, if possible, than that of the out-and-out slaves. Father Bernardino de Manzanedo, one of the Jeronymite governors of Española, wrote to Charles V in 1518: "Since no one has the assurance that he will be able to keep the Indians given him in encomienda, he uses them like borrowed goods, and thus many have perished and are perishing."

The blind and fumbling Indian policy of the Spanish crown during the first tragic thirty years makes it easy to drift into a denunciation of the whole Spanish effort. When the policy was not one of squeezing the last *maravedí* out of the natives, as under Ferdinand the Catholic, it was such quixotic nonsense as attempting to restore them to a state of independence under clerical guidance (the Dominican thesis). The irreconcilable conflict between priest and layman, piety and practicality, was further confused by the fact that Spain drifted into the empire business with no adequate machinery of administration. Moreover, the center of government was so distant that months and years had to elapse between the recognition of a problem and any remedial measure. The wonder is that anything constructive was ever done.

With all its faults and manifest hypocrisy, the encomienda was a halting but intelligent step toward setting up a stable economy in America. It need not astonish us that it had no immediate effect on the life of the natives or that the encomendero took his missionary duties lightly. He was far too intent upon procuring the necessities of life and the scanty grains of gold which his Indians could wash out of the gravel to allow the new legal fiction to alter his murderous course. By 1510, conditions among the miserable remnants of the island population were such that the first Dominican missionaries to arrive there were horrified and at once embarked upon their long and heroic campaign to remedy them.

The year 1510 marked the beginning of that curious politico-humanitarian pact between the Spanish crown and the Dominican order, by which the two were joined in a common fight to suppress the New World feudalism of the conquistadores and to preserve the Indians from extinction. The first objective singled out by the Dominicans was the encomienda, to which they ascribed most of the evils of the Indies. Their violent denunciations of the encomenderos (in which they were opposed by the Franciscans) brought about a tardy and, in some respects, ludicrous attempt to save the situation by setting up an ecclesiastical régime over the Indians.

The Code of Burgos of 1512, the first written for the New World, is an excellent example of the idealism, irrationality, and ignorance characteristic of the early Spanish clergymen who legislated for the relief of the Indians. The proper government of innocent aborigines, according to the reverend lawmakers, included such astonishing measures as teaching them to say their prayers in Latin, and restricting their heathenish custom of taking baths. The Code of Burgos was stillborn in any case, because the natives of the Antilles were past saving. It did lay down several principles, nevertheless, which were never abandoned. The first of them was, of course, that the most important duty of the crown was to convert the Indians to Christianity and to bring them to a "reasonable" (Spanish) way of life. In spite of Dominican protests, the encomienda was retained as an instrument to that end (King Ferdinand had 1400 Indians in encomienda). Second, and of great significance in the subsequent history of the Indies, the Code of Burgos postulated the necessity of organizing the Indians in regular European communities, in which they would live under Spanish tutelage, and in which their services would be more available for useful work. It was the typical mismating of economic necessity with humanitarianism which was to confuse Indian legislation for centuries, but which was to result in that remarkable and not altogether useless paternalistic code known as the *Recopilación de las Leyes de los Reynos de las Indias.*

Cortés and most of his men had lived for years in the Antilles before undertaking the conquest of New Spain. They had grown up under the encomienda, so to speak, and were fully aware that their true wealth lay in the labor of the Indians. Cortés had some doubts about the wisdom of allowing the encomienda to be transferred to New Spain, or, at least, he so expressed himself to the emperor. When, however, the conquest was over and his men clamored for their reward, there was nothing to give them but Indians in encomienda, and they all became little feudal lords, Cortés the greatest of all—all this in disobedience to the express order of the emperor, but the order had come too late. The crown, faced with a *fait accompli*, accepted the situation, but from then on pursued the policy of seizing all the encomiendas whose holders died, or otherwise forfeited title.

Fortunately, the encomienda in New Spain was a very different thing from the mere subterfuge for slavery it had been in the islands. This was partly due to the character of Cortés and partly to the character of the Indians. In New Spain the conquistadores found a hardy agrarian people, long inured to the exacting labors of the field and to the primitive feudalism of the native overlords. The change of masters was accepted with some indifference. The status of the pre-Conquest peasant (*macehual*) made the transition easy. There is a curious document in the national archives of Mexico, a petition sent by the chief men of Huexotzingo to Don Luis de Velasco in 1554, begging him to allow them to donate certain of their lands to the peasants.

"We principales," they wrote, "have held our lands from time immemorial, ever since our forefathers left them to us, whereas the macehuales had none; and they cultivated our lands and brought us wood and water, and built all the buildings we had need of, and they gave us chickens and chile and everything for our maintenance, and their wives and children served us in everything we commanded. All this they did so that we might allow them to sow their crops on our lands." The macehuales who received the donation were to bind themselves to cultivate the land of the principales.

The reader is not to infer that the Indians of New Spain were better off under the encomenderos than under their native lords, but at least the change was not one from heaven to hell, as one reads in the storybooks. And then, as routine and familiarity rubbed some of the sharp edges off of mutual intercourse and, especially, when the New Laws removed the right of the encomenderos to use Indian labor at their pleasure, there developed between them and their charges some sort of tolerable relationship. It had a healthy basis in common interests. The Indians supported the encomenderos with the tributes, while the encomenderos protected them from the rapacity of other Spaniards. Bernal Díaz del Castillo was such an encomendero. His encomienda embraced a number of villages in Guatemala. In 1579 a certain Martín Ximénez obtained from the Audiencia of Guatemala a grant of land lying within the encomienda of Bernal Díaz, and his Indians appealed to him to stand by. The old conquistador, then about eighty-six, took the case to court and won.

"To this [petition for the grant]," he argued, "I reply and swear that if the said lands could be granted without harm to the Indians, I myself should have asked former governors to grant them to my six legitimate sons. But, as I have said, these lands are the ones on which the Indians have their crops of maize, peppers, and cacao, *and from which they pay their tributes*, and it is their ancient holding and that is why I have not asked for them, because it would mean the destruction of the Indians." (Emphasis supplied.)

Another bit of evidence is the case of Melchor de Pedraza, encomendero of Atotonilco and Zacamula (present state of Hidalgo), who in 1583 appealed to the General Indian Court to protect his Indians from their own governor and principales. These officers, he complained, were forcing the macehuales to work on their lands and in their commerce the greater part of the year, with the result that the Indians had no time for the cultivation of their fields, for their own maintenance and for the payment of their tribute.

It would be hazardous to conclude that the encomendero of New Spain, after the middle of the sixteenth century, turned into a gentle patriarch, intent upon the well-being of his charges. I merely wish to point out that the encomendero did not necessarily continue to be the monster usually depicted, and that life under him was made more tolerable for the Indians by a community of interest. Bernal Díaz, who was fairly typical of his class, seems to have settled comfortably into the life of a country squire, living on his tributes and acting the part of the great white father to the Indians of his encomienda. The encomenderos, it should be added, did not continue for long to be the most numerous or the most typical of the Spanish settlers. They formed a restricted and privileged aristocracy, but they were constantly being diminished by death, and they were constantly losing ground in their battle with the crown. By 1571 they had been reduced to the status of pensioners, as is clear from the following law of Philip II:

"The encomienda is a right granted by Royal Grace to the deserving of the Indies, to receive and collect for themselves the tributes of the Indians given them in trust, for their life and the life of one heir, ... with the obligation of looking after the spiritual and material welfare of the Indians and of dwelling in and defending the Provinces of their trust, and of doing homage and making personal oath to fulfill all this."

After the Conquest New Spain rapidly filled up with men from every stratum of Spanish society, and the more who came the more acute was the problem of feeding them and getting useful work done. Out of this complex developed the extraordinary institution which we shall take up in the second part of this chapter.

II

It would be wearisome to review here the long and involved history of the legislation and the abortive attempts to ameliorate the lot of the Indians of New Spain during the first twenty years after the Conquest. I need hardly repeat that all such measures were modified or broken by the hard necessity of procuring food and labor. It is still a mystery to me why the Council of the Indies did not envisage the magnitude of the problem until it had brought the American dominions to the brink of ruin by the New Laws of 1542. That necessity forced all Spaniards—the encomendero, the corregidor, the miner, the farmer, the priest, and even the missionary—into a tacit conspiracy to defeat the humanitarianism of the Dominican-ruled Council.

The New Laws, however, after they had been thrown back in the hopper and winnowed of their more impracticable features, made a definite break with the past. They defined the Indians as "free subjects of the king." Less formally, the Spaniards generally defined them as lazy, improvident, childish, irresponsible, drunken vagabonds—a notion which has endured to this day and which, better than any commentary, illustrates the profound gulf which separated European and Indian cultures. Clause 26 of the New Laws abolished all "forced labor of free Indians," and that clause was never repealed. Recognizing that work had to be done, the Council humorlessly proposed the substitution of Negro slaves, and of paid free labor. But Negro slaves were expensive and troublesome, and the Indians had no tradition of, and no interest in, working for wages, especially when the wages paid were so microscopic that they could not have attracted anybody. So the government was faced once again with the weary problem of finding a way to get necessary work done.

Out of that necessity was born an invention, admirable in its simplicity, by which the Indian, *without sacrificing his natural liberty*, could be coerced into accepting the obligations of his new citizenship. This invention was called the *repartimiento*, that is, an allotment or assessment. It was based on the sound principle that the state might force its citizens to do such work as was necessary for the existence of the commonwealth. It was the eminent-domain principle applied to labor. Necessary work was defined as the production of foodstuffs, the operation of mines, the erection of public buildings, churches, and convents, the opening and maintenance of roads, harbors, and irrigation ditches, the laying out of new towns and congregations, and the care of travelers. It will at once be seen that few mechanical services were *not* considered necessary for the existence of the commonwealth. The important thing about the repartimiento, as far as the Indians were concerned, was that *no one might be forced to work for private gain, and that all services must be paid for in cash.* The authors of the repartimiento were convinced that coercion was an evil, but that sometimes it was a necessary evil. So they designed it merely as a stop-gap to fill in the transition to a more desirable state of things, or as an educational interlude to serve until the Indians should learn to work for wages like civilized human beings. But the repartimiento lasted, at least in its field of widest application, agriculture, for two and a half centuries, and even after Independence coercion was continued under the cheaper and much worse regulated system of debt peonage.

Under the system of repartimientos a percentage of the male population of any community, varying from four per cent in the mines to twenty-five per cent in agriculture, could be called upon to work for wages for a week or a fortnight at some specified task. Caciques, principales, and civil and ecclesiastical officers were exempted. A person desiring the services of Indians made application to the local corregidor, or to the *juez de repartimiento*, stating that he was engaged in the production of wheat, maize, or cattle, or that he operated a mine, or planned to erect a public building, church, or the like—all for the good of the commonwealth—and that he needed the services of so many Indians for such a length of time. He agreed to pay them the prevailing wage (which varied from one real a day in agriculture to two in building and mining), and to treat them well. The indispensable Thomas Gage has left us a lively and accurate account of the agricultural repartimiento at work.

"The Spaniards that live about that country [Guatemala] ... allege that all their trading and farming is for the good of the commonwealth, and therefore whereas there are not Spaniards enough for so ample and large a country to do all their work, and all are not able to buy slaves and blackamoors, they stand in need of the Indians' help to serve them for their pay and hire; whereupon it hath been considered that a partition of Indian labourers be made every Monday, or Sunday in the afternoon to the Spaniards, according to the farms they occupy, or according to their several employments, calling, and trading with mules, or any other way. So that for such and such a district there is named an officer, who is called *juez repartidor*, who according to a list made of every farm, house, and person, is to give so many Indians by the week.... They name the town and place of their meeting upon Sunday or Monday, to the which themselves and the Spaniards of that district do resort. The Indians of the several towns are to have in a readiness so many labourers as the Court of Guatemala hath appointed to be weekly taken out of such a town, who are conducted by an Indian officer [*mandón*] to the town of general meeting; and when they come thither with their tools, their spades, shovels, bills, or axes, with their provision of victuals for a week (which are commonly some dry cakes of maize, puddings of *frijoles*, or French beans, and a little chilli or biting long pepper, or a bit of cold meat for the first day or two), and with beds on their backs (which is only a coarse woollen mantle to wrap about them when they lie on the bare ground), then are they shut up in the town house, some with blows, some with spurnings, some with boxes on the ear, if presently they go not in.

"Now all being gathered together, and the house filled with them, the *juez repartidor*, or officer, calls by order of the list such and such a Spaniard, and also calls out of the house so many Indians as by the Court are commanded to be given him (some are allowed three, some four, some ten, some fifteen, some twenty, according to their employments), and delivereth unto the Spaniard his Indians, and so to all the rest, till they be all served; who when they receive their Indians, take from them a tool, or their mantles, to secure them that they run not away; and for every Indian delivered unto them, they give unto the *juez repartidor*, or officer, half a real, which is threepence an Indian for his fees, which yearly mounteth to him to a great deal of money.... If complaint be made by any Spaniard that such and such an Indian did run away from him, and served him not the week past, the Indian must be brought, and surely tied to a post by his hands in the marketplace, and there be whipped upon his bare back. But if the poor Indian complain that the Spaniard cozened and cheated him of his shovel, axe, bill, mantle, or wages, no justice shall be executed against the cheating Spaniard, neither shall the Indian be righted, though it be true the order runs equally in favour of both Indian and Spaniard. Thus are the poor Indians sold for threepence apiece for a whole week's slavery, not permitted to go home at nights unto their wives, though their work lie not above a mile from the town where they live; nay some are carried ten or twelve miles from their home, who must not return till Saturday night late, and must that week do whatsoever their master pleaseth to command them. The wages appointed them will scarce find them meat and drink, for they are not allowed a real a day, which is but sixpence, and with that they are to find themselves, but for six days' work and diet they are to have five reals, which is half a crown."

All forms of coerced labor were subject to grave abuses, as the records of the General Indian Court abundantly prove, but even so Gage's indignation is not to be taken at its face value. He and all his kind lived by virtue of the system, for one thing. The Indians serving a fourth of their time in the fields for hire were probably no worse off than the peasants of Europe, as Humboldt remarked. They were certainly not slaves. The pittance they received was insufficient to support life at any level, but the Indians did not depend upon wages for a living. They had their milpas and three-fourths of their time to themselves for cultivating them. In a sense their pay was not a wage at all. It may be pertinent to add that rural wages in parts of Mexico today are not appreciably higher, as in Oaxaca. The system as applied to agriculture appears to have been rather easy-going, and it was fearfully inefficient as compared with Negro slavery in the United States two hundred years later.

However, in the early years of the repartimiento (as a system, that is, for coercion had always existed in some form), say, from 1550 to 1609, it was subject to appalling abuses. The Franciscans, whose chief spokesman was Fray Jerónimo de Mendieta, undertook their correction. In 1575 he exposed the evils of the system in a letter to Philip II. Men, he said, were brought from great distances and from different climates, and had to spend many days on the road—time for which they were not paid. They could not carry enough food for the journey, and some of their journeys were so long, indeed, that it would take a horse to carry sufficient provisions. On these killing journeys they were obliged to sleep shelterless on the ground in all kinds of weather, and they became so weak from hunger and exhaustion that they fell an easy prey to pestilence. They were beaten and otherwise mistreated by the Indian mandones; they were forced to work longer hours and for longer periods than the law allowed; they were cheated of their pay. Etc. This dismal catalogue of misery was repeated for twenty years, until one tremendous petition sent in by the Franciscans in 1594 stirred the Council of the Indies to undertake a complete codification of the labor system. The result was a labor code designed to cover every phase of Indian employment, free or forced.

The Ordinances of 1609 show a great advance in the science of law-making, in their frank recognition of the problem to be solved, and in their practical and realistic approach to it. They afford an excellent peep into the workings of the paternalistic mind. (Remember that this was in *1609* and that the Rights of Man had not been invented.) Some of their more important provisions were: (1) Indians might not be brought from excessive distances (over one day's journey) or from different climates (cold to hot, or hot to cold); (2) their wages were to be adequate and proportioned to their work; (3) they must be paid for time spent on the road; (4) they must be paid in cash, in their own hands and in the presence of a magistrate; (5) their hours of labor were to be fixed by the viceroy; (6) they were to be allowed to go home at night whenever practicable; (7) to prevent their being considered as serfs or bound to the land they might not be mentioned in any deed as belonging to such and such an estate or mine, for they were by nature "as free as the Spaniards themselves"; (8) they might not be used, even voluntarily, in sugar mills or in pearl fishing, because their weak constitutions unfitted them for such labor; (9) their tributes might not be commuted into personal services (an old practice among encomenderos).

The common criticism of Spanish legislation which aimed at the amelioration of the lot of the Indians is that it was evaded more often than not. I think it may be taken as axiomatic that all legislation, even in the United States, which runs counter to the interests of certain groups is frequently evaded. It is not to be presumed that the Spaniards differed from the rest of humanity in that respect. The labor code of 1609, however, did not aim at the destruction of a system, like the New Laws of 1542, for example, but at a reasonable regulation of long established practice. For that reason the General Indian Court, which had the job of enforcing it, was faced with no strenuous opposition. On the contrary, the severity with which it came down on offenders is sufficient proof that it had the support of a substantial majority of public opinion. To sum up, then, by 1609 coercion of labor (the repartimiento) had become the accepted and normal routine for getting useful work done, and it was codified and regulated sufficiently to prevent its being an intolerable burden on the native population. That this last statement is true I shall demonstrate in the remainder of the chapter.

Several factors outside of regulation contributed to make the repartimiento bearable. The first was that it did little violence to native customs. All the evidence we have goes to prove that before the Conquest the Indian peasant (macehual) was obliged to contribute part of his time and labor to the cultivation of the common land set aside for the support of priests and officials. The petition of the principales of Huexotzingo cited above indicates that the macehuales were obliged to work the lands of their overlords on a sort of sharecropping basis. They were also accustomed to give them personal services and tribute. Alonso de Zurita, writing in 1575 in support of the Franciscan thesis against the repartimiento, said of the personal services of the macehuales before the Conquest:

"The ordinary daily personal service of wood and water was assessed by the day, by villages, and by barrios, in such wise that at the most each Indian had to serve only twice a year, and, as has been said, it was assessed among those living close by, and for that reason they were exempted to some extent from the tribute paid by the others."

The pre-Conquest macehual, then, was accustomed to paying tribute and to rendering personal services for the support of his lord. The good-of-the-commonwealth principle must have struck him as right and proper, or at least as something to be expected. In the very great number of cases of abuse of the repartimiento heard by the General Indian Court no objection was ever made to the principle of the thing, but only that such and such a person had violated law *or custom.* Custom *(costumbre)*, it should be added, was Indian law and was always respected by the Spanish courts when it did not run counter to Spanish law.

The second factor in the control of the repartimiento was the endemic shortage of labor, particularly in the mines and Spanish towns. During the first century after the Conquest the Indian population continually decreased. Smallpox, measles, typhus, and other epidemics wiped out great blocks of natives, while the dislocation of their economy and the normal scourges of famine, flood, and drought accounted for many more. As a result competition for labor in the mines raised wages to such a point, even before the repartimiento became a system, that the miners begged for relief. The same phenomenon occurred in the Spanish cities, where mechanics could earn several times the wage paid in repartimientos, and the surrounding agricultural lands were, as a consequence, drained of needed labor. The cry of the hacendados was that the Indians were being "spoiled" by high wages.

A third and extremely interesting factor in the modification of the repartimiento arose from the nature of New Spain's most vital industry, silver mining. In 1540 a survey of Indian communities was made which showed a considerable part of the population being used in the mines. That was before the discovery of the vast silver deposits which were to lead to such unpredictable consequences in the world. The mines in the pre-silver days were mostly gold placers, in which forced gangs could be used economically. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, *mines were generally operated with free paid labor*. Such an astonishing development demands our attention.

After the exhaustion of the unimportant placer gold properties, and the opening of the enormously rich veins of silver, mining came to be a matter of sinking shafts and running drifts, to say nothing of the complicated technical processes of treating the ore. These tasks are essentially individual and cannot be performed efficiently by gang labor. Another factor in the emancipation was the location of the mineral deposits, the richest of which were in arid, sparsely settled, non-agricultural regions, where the labor supply had to be brought from great distances—a costly procedure and one provocative of much discontent. Moreover, the weekly or fortnightly changing of the repartimientos was destructive of the continuity necessary to efficient operation and prevented the building up of a body of skilled operatives, which became progressively more essential as the processes of mining became more complex. The repartimiento disappeared from mining, then, because, among other reasons, it was a clumsy and inefficient device for supplying skilled and specialized labor. Another potent cause of discontent with the repartimiento (in mining) was the disparity in wages between the free *peón* and the men of the repartimiento. This discontent led to dangerous riots (strikes) in the eighteenth century. The most powerful factor of all, perhaps, in the elimination of the repartimiento in mining was the unceasing demand for the precious metals in Europe and Asia, which made it profitable for mine operators to work their properties at full capacity and to offer high wages and bonuses to their workmen. Thus it came about that in the course of time the mines gathered about them communities of skilled mechanics specialized in that industry and dependent for the subsistence upon the outlying agricultural districts.

The foregoing speculation was provoked by an arresting statement made by Humboldt in 1803: "In the Kingdom of New Spain, at least within the last thirty or forty years, the labour of the mines is free, and there remains no trace of the *mita* [repartimiento].... Nowhere does the lower people enjoy in greater security the fruit of their labours than in the mines of Mexico; no law forces the Indian to choose this species of labour, or to prefer one mine to another; and when he is displeased with the proprietor of one mine, he may offer his services to another master who may perhaps pay more regularly."

The great Humboldt was so struck with this phenomenon that he added later: "The labour of a miner is entirely free throughout the whole Kingdom of New Spain; and no Indian or Mestizoe can be forced to dedicate themselves to the working of the mines.... The Mexican miner is the best paid of all miners; he gains at least from 25 to 30 francs (£1 to £1 4s.) per week of six days.... The miners, *tenateros* and *faeneros* [carriers and piece-workers] occupied in transporting the minerals to the place of assemblage *(despachos)* frequently gain more than 6 francs per day of 6 hours (4s. 10d.)."

The miners earned their high wages. In a deep mine, such as the Valenciana at Guanajuato, lack of ventilation was a continual hazard. There was no hoisting machinery available up to the late eighteenth century, and ore had to be carried up as much as 1500 feet on men's backs. This was one of the most expensive operations. *Tenateros* (carriers) made five or six trips a day up the long chickenladders carrying leather sacks of ore weighing up to 200 pounds.

The repartimiento, finally, was made tolerable by the effective control exercised by the General Indian Court, which pursued a consistent policy of favoring the Indian complainant. In the uncounted multitude of cases in the records of the court I found only one which was decided against the Indian. If more evidence of that control is needed, it is supplied by Hipólito Villaroel, who, in his *Enfermedades Políticas* (1785), denounced the court for allowing the Indians to appeal from the decisions of local magistrates, a privilege, he said, which destroyed respect for authority and made them "insolent."

At the risk of overstating the case, I am summarizing below several instances of the General Indian Court's intervention in labor complaints. The "investigation" in which most of the hearings end was the first step in the correction of the situation, not the end of the case.

July 23, 1590. The court orders the juez repartidor of the mines of Temascaltepec to limit the repartimiento of the Indians of Toluca to the customary four per cent.

March 4, 1592. The Indians of Ajijic (Jalisco) complain that for many years they have been sending six men a week to work on the cathedral of Guadalajara, and that lately they have been obliged to give seven more for the Jesuit plantation of Toluquilla. Lately an epidemic of typhus has so reduced their numbers that they cannot fill their quotas, notwithstanding which the alguaciles seize them, abuse them and fine them. Conditions have become so intolerable that men are abandoning the town. Investigation.

October 10, 1595. The court orders the alcalde mayor of Zacatula to supply a repartimiento of thirty men a week for twelve weeks, to build a new customs house at Acapulco. It is to be apportioned among the villages of the district, according to their capacity. The men are to be paid at the rate of a silver real a day.

April 20, 1617. The Indians of Tlaxcala state that they have been sending fifty men a week to work on the cathedral of Puebla. The men, however, are seized on the way and forced to work in the plantations of the Spaniards, fifteen to twenty days on end, at six reals a week. They demand that the Spaniards pay them the difference in wages and that they be protected from such interference. The court orders the authorities of Puebla and Tlaxcala to correct the abuse, on pain of 1000 pesos fine.

May 30, 1616. The Indians of Nucupátaro (Michoacán) complain that they are obliged to send men to certain copper mines at a distance of a hundred miles, over rough country and wide rivers; that the difference in climates is very great and they cannot protect themselves against the extremes of temperature; that their repartimiento of ten men a week really amounts to thirty, as they have to keep two shifts on the roads; that they cannot carry enough food for the journey; that they are sometimes caught by floods and consume all their provisions while waiting for the waters to subside; that, in any case, there is no need for the repartimiento, for the mines in question have been getting along without it for many years; that they are not used in the mines anyway, but on the plantation of the proprietor. Investigation.

1633. An extraordinary case of extortion and abuse brought against the mine operators of Zacualpan. The investigation brings out that the Indians are forced to work naked in the water; that they are brought to the mines tied together by the neck; that they are beaten; that the juez repartidor has been selling them to the Jesuits to work in the sugar mills; that the Jesuits have paid the alguacil in charge of them 900 pesos in bribes; that the alguacil has been collecting two pesos apiece from Indians unable to serve. The court canceled the repartimiento for the mines; the alguacil was fined 200 pesos and exiled from the province; and the mines were shut down at least seven years before the repartimiento was restored.

Several conclusions are indicated from an examination of the records of the court: (1) for 250 years the repartimiento was generally employed in public works and agriculture; (2) the court was an effective check on its worst features; (3) the court consistently favored the Indians in its decisions.

The determination of real wages in a remote period is a very difficult problem. Average prices do us little good. Maize may be worth a peso a *fanega* (hundredweight) one season and four the next. It may be worth half a peso in an agricultural community and two or three times that in a mining town a few miles up in the mountains. Prices fluctuated violently from the irregularity of crops, since there were no storage facilities to stabilize them. So I see little profit in attempting to plot a wage curve for the repartimiento. The Indians' earnings were hardly more than a token wage in any case. In 1550 he earned two and a half reals a week. By 1600 he was earning a real a day, and the rate tended to stick at that point. John Stephens found the debt-peonage system working in Yucatan in 1840 on the same weekly quota basis as the old repartimiento, and the men, called *luneros* (that is, "Monday-men"), were still receiving a real a day, which was credited against their "debt." In the repartimientos destined for service in a Spanish town or mine, where expenses were higher and where the men competed with free labor, the pay was substantially better, averaging about two reals a day, but it rarely exceeded half the rate paid for free labor.

One of the arguments by which the repartimiento was rationalized was that it would serve to educate the Indian to the status of a free wage-earner. Obviously, it did no such thing. A free wage-earning class did develop in the cities and mines, but certainly it was through no desire on the part of white employers, who did everything they could to prevent it. The motive, of course, was cheap labor, and the excuse offered was always that the Indian would not work without coercion. That assumption, which is still common, was dignified by being made law as early as 1512, when the Code of Burgos stated: "It has been seen by long experience that the natives are by nature inclined to a life of idleness and vice." Perhaps the Indian will not work without coercion, but the thesis is weakened by the experience of the mining industry, which found it possible to attract workers by paying them adequate wages.

Coercion could legally be employed only in certain defined activities. That left out of the reckoning the cultivation of such export crops as sugar, cacao, cochineal, and indigo—the so-called plantation crops. Moreover, the early missionaries had argued that the Indians were not physically fitted for some types of labor, and so it was forbidden to employ them in the manufacture of sugar, in pearl fishing, in the cultivation of indigo (the fumes of which were supposed to be injurious), and subterranean mining. Hence operators were obliged to import numbers of Negro slaves. The great expense, however, and the Negroes' tendency to run away and form colonies of outlaws *(cimarrones)* in the mountains, made the employment of Indians more desirable. So Indians were bootlegged into those occupations and were paid high enough wages to keep them quiet. By the end of the eighteenth century, according to Humboldt, the sugar mills were generally operated with Indian labor.

In plantation crops it was obviously necessary to have a dependable and continuous supply of labor, preferably cheap. Since the repartimiento was forbidden, some other means of securing workers had to be devised. The problem was serious, for, without continuity, it would be impossible to operate. One Spaniard, who in the eighteenth century invested in cotton and cacao lands in Guatemala, was obliged to abandon his enterprise because he could not secure regular help. He complained that the Indians would work only until the first payday and then would disappear for an indefinite period—a complaint that is still frequently heard. As plantation crops became more important, the device of tying men to their jobs by contract and debt came into general use. The practice had been prohibited as long ago as the reign of Charles V, but it was too obvious a solution of the labor problem not to be used clandestinely, and it became so widespread that it was finally accepted as legal.

The working of debt peonage was simplicity itself. What Indian could resist accepting an advance of a few pesos against his wages at the price of signing a piece of paper which he could not read? Once having signed, he was caught, and the local alguacil could haul him off to work whenever he was needed. Debt peonage became so general that the complete transition to it after Independence was entirely logical. In the nineteenth century, up to the Revolution of 1910, the pulque haciendas of the plateau, the grain and cattle haciendas, the sugar, coffee, banana, cacao, tobacco, henequen, and indigo plantations, all depended upon debt peonage to secure a cheap and constant supply of labor. Meanwhile, after Independence the Indian little by little lost the land which the Spanish government had wisely set aside for his subsistence and sank to the level of a landless serf, living at the mercy of his employer.

To supply labor for the textile manufactories of New Spain the operators had recourse to methods which kept the General Indian Court full of complaints. Weaving was the earliest developed, as well as the most important, industry of New Spain, outside of mining. Sheep raising was introduced by Cortés. By 1580 the annual wool clip had reached the imposing figure of 300,000 pounds, and large numbers of men were employed in its manufacture. The ancient problem of insuring cheap and continuous operation led to the establishment of one of the ugliest of colonial institutions, the *obraje*, which was the worst kind of sweat-shop, usually a small affair of a few spindles and looms. The commonest means of procuring labor was the press-gang, the purchase of convicts from the local jails, contracts, and debt peonage. The men were kept on the job by the simple device of locking them in. The General Indian Court fought for years to abate the worst abuses of the obraje, but without much success. The textile industry was either too profitable, or the workers were too far beyond the fringe of respectability, to make control effective. Cheap Mexican textiles invaded markets as distant as Peru, but no improvement in the lot of the workers accompanied the growth of the industry.

Father Agustín Morfi, visiting the obrajes of Querétaro in 1777, says of them (in his invaluable *Viaje de Indios*): "There were once many factories here, where serge, flannel, blankets, and ponchos were made, but they have decayed through the tyranny of their management. Since the majority of the operatives are convicts and are cruelly treated, they do not work with the care which they might otherwise exercise, and the free workers, who might make a living in them, will not work there because of the horror with which these workshops are regarded."

Humboldt was profoundly shocked by them. "On visiting these workshops," he wrote, "a traveler is disagreeably struck, not only with the great imperfection of the technical process in the preparation for dyeing, but in a particular manner with the unhealthiness of the situation, and the bad treatment to which the workmen are exposed. Free men, Indians, and people of colour are confounded with the criminals distributed by justice among the manufactories, in order to be compelled to work. All appear half naked, covered with rags, meagre, and deformed. The doors, which are double, remain constantly shut, and the workmen are not permitted to quit the house. Those who are married are only allowed to see their families on Sundays. All are unmercifully flogged if they commit the smallest trespass on the order established in the manufactory."

In other trades, such as carpentry, masonry, rope-making, tanning, leather- and saddle-making, and the like, Indian workmen were extensively used, but they were kept in the lower ranks by the medieval guild system brought over by the Spanish *maestros*. In the hierarchy of apprentice, journeyman, and master the Spaniards took care to save the better paid jobs for themselves by making it impossible for an Indian to advance beyond the rank of journeyman. It was difficult, in fact, for an Indian to get himself accepted as apprentice, and he was usually employed only in the unskilled operations. There was nothing to be done about it, as the guilds were powerful and their privileges were sanctioned by laws and customs that reached far back into the Middle Ages. In their monopolistic tendencies they remind one somewhat of modern craft unions.

There was still a wide field open for Indian craftsmen in the manufacture of articles for native consumption. I see no justification for assuming that the Spaniards destroyed Indian handicrafts. The museums are full of pieces preserved from colonial times. Most native crafts were protected, because they were despised by the whites, and there was no money in them anyway. So the Indians continued to make and use their own domestic wares without much interruption. Otherwise, the humble markets of remote villages today would not be full of useful and handsome pottery, textiles, and leather goods.

Native crafts have lately been discovered by tourists in search of the picturesque, with the unfortunate result that many "Mexican Curious," as one enterprising dealer used to advertise, are now turned out in factories, or imported from Japan. The virus has infected crafts along the more frequented tourist routes. Last spring (1940) I visited the old textile village of Teotitlán del Valle (Oaxaca) looking for some honest handicrafts, and found the Zapotec workmen weaving hideous imitation Aztec designs in shrieking aniline colors. "*En el nombre de Dios*," I protested to the maestro, "why do you make these ugly things instead of your own beautiful blankets?" "That's the way they order them," he answered. "But doesn't anyone make the old blankets?" "No, señor. One maestro refused to change and made the good blankets with cochineal and indigo, but he died. It is all gone now." The most dreadful example of this modern destruction may be found in the town of Santa Ana, Tlaxcala, one of the oldest textile centers in Mexico, where one shop advertises "Genuine Imitations of Saltillo Blankets!"

* * *

There should be a message in this chapter, but I do not know what it is. Modern Mexico is caught in the same dilemma which caused so many headaches in New Spain. Industry demands cheap labor; the rapidly growing urban population must be fed; and the Indian must be made into a good citizen, if not a Christian. Falling production and rising prices keep the country in a continual crisis. If a new solution is not found, I should not be surprised if some one rediscovers the ancient good-of-the-commonwealth principle one of these days.

Chapter XI

THE SECOND GENERATION

The sons of the old conquerors, with few exceptions, did not go in for a career of conquering. They dug in and held on. Their fathers' prowess had made them a privileged aristocracy, and their ambition stopped with defending their property and position. Content with being a parasite class, they argued that the crown owed them a living, and they kept up a ceaseless bombardment of the Council of the Indies whenever their goods or privileges were threatened, or they saw a chance of improving their fortunes. Their fathers had set the pattern. As one by one the old conquerors fell on evil days, their first act was to file a petition *(probanza)* with the Council, setting forth at length the services they had rendered, and that now in their old age they were faced with beggary, and their precious offspring with them, unless they were given more Indians, more land, or more money. Not very many years after the Conquest some of its stalwart heroes, to judge by their petitions, were a sniveling and shameless lot of panhandlers —which in no wise deflated their pride and presumption. Their sons carried on.

It was an unfortunate thing for New Spain that Don Luis de Velasco died when he did. The unheralded crisis which was about to threaten the existence of the kingdom was such that only a man of his character could have met it successfully. As it was, deprived of his wisdom and strength, New Spain came as near disintegration as at any time since the ugly days of Nuño de Guzmán and the first Audiencia, thirty-five years before.

In 1563, the year before Velasco's death, the son and heir of Hernán Cortés came to New Spain to take over his father's vast estate. Don Martín Cortés, second Marqués del Valle de Oaxaca, was a spoiled darling of privilege. He had been reared in the expensive court of Charles V, and had been sent to England with Prince Philip among the crowd of young magníficos who dazzled the eyes of the British at the unlucky marriage of Philip and Mary Tudor. In New Spain the young marqués, full of arrogance and ostentation, was bent on making the country accept him as the son of his father—a thing which the country, as it turned out, was very willing to do. In his train were his two bastard brothers, Don Luis and Don Martín, the latter the mestizo son of Cortés by his Indian mistress, Doña Marina. Both boys had been legitimized by Pope Clement VII, and both had received the coveted habit of Santiago from Charles V. (Since Cortés whimsically named two of his sons Martín, I shall refer to his legitimate heir as the Marqués and to the other as Don Martín.)

The Marqués set up his household in Mexico City in the regal style befitting his great name. Such was the magic of that name, and such were the wealth, swank, and presumption of the Marqués, that he soon gathered about him a solid block of the young bloods of the aristocracy. He was their natural leader in their concern to protect their encomiendas, which it was the evident purpose of the crown to abolish. To make the power of the Marqués more formidable, the Indians transferred to him the blind adoration in which they had held his father. Not the least element of his strength was supplied by the Franciscans, who had always been hot partisans of Cortés, and who were now in a bitter fight with the Council of the Indies and with Archbishop Montúfar, to preserve their position among the Indians, and to prevent their substitution by the secular clergy.

This dangerous coalition of forces was bound to cause uneasiness in the mind of the jealous and aging Velasco. Friction between him and the Marqués was made inevitable by the latter's insufferable arrogance and childish vanity, which led him openly to show his contempt for the viceroy. Circumstances favored the Marqués. A row between Velasco and the Audiencia had brought over a royal visitor to investigate, one Licenciado Valderrama, who otherwise turned out to be an intriguing and unworthy officer, ready to bend a listening ear to gossip, and greatly flattered by the attention which the magnificent Marqués did not fail to show him.

Flanked by the favor of Valderrama, the Marqués and his satellites grew in boldness and soon had the capital split into two factions. It was a revival of the old conflict between the crown and the feudal conquistadores which had come so close to bringing on civil war when the New Laws were brought by Tello de Sandoval. Rumors of the impending abolition of the encomiendas kept the fires of discontent well stoked, and the more hardy spirits among the followers of the Marqués began to toy with the notion of cutting loose from the old country. Many things favored the success of such a movement. The endless wars of Charles V and Philip II had weakened Spain to such an extent that it was unlikely that an effective force could soon be sent to put down a rebellion. The royal treasury was exhausted, and the crown had sunk to the point of begging for outright gifts. The fatuity of Valderrama, the short-sighted timidity of the Audiencia, and the untimely death of Velasco were so many additional encouragements to conspiracy.

The active heads of the movement were the two daring and popular sons of an old conqueror, Gil González Dávila. These young men, Alonso and Gil González Dávila, meeting with their fellows in the palace of the Marqués, kept their grievances fresh and their courage up, and in time hatched out a plot. The plan agreed upon was intelligent and thorough. On a certain Friday, the day when the city government met, the conspirators were to divide themselves into squads of eight to ten. One squad was to take the door of the council chamber; another would take over the armory; and a third was to penetrate into the Audiencia and kill the oidores and the visitor Valderrama. When all this had been done, a man in the belfry of the cathedral was to give two strokes on a bell, whereupon the viceroy, the treasury officers, and all who should oppose them were to be put to the sword. The populace of the capital was to be overawed by a display of force. Don Luis Cortés was to dash to Vera Cruz and prevent the departure of the fleet, to keep the news of the rebellion from reaching Spain. Don Martín Cortés was to seize Zacatecas, while Puebla and other centers were to be taken by the squads assigned to them. Then the Marqués was to be proclaimed king, and a parliament (*cortes*) was to be assembled to recognize him. A new nobility was to be created, including the Indian caciques[1]; the land was to be redistributed among the deserving, and then let the king of Spain stop them if he could!

The plot of the Dávila brothers was not at all foredoomed to failure, as is usually held. On the contrary, if it had been carried through with daring and dispatch, it could very well have succeeded. Its first requisite, however, was effective leadership, another Cortés. The only possible head of it was the Marqués, for success depended upon his wealth and prestige. But the Marqués blew hot and cold; at one moment he seemed to be leading the conspiracy, and at the next he was fearfully currying favor with Valderrama and the Audiencia. Inaction sapped the enthusiasm of the plotters. News of the movement reached the Audiencia, but that body was in a blue funk and could do nothing. Finally, Alonso Dávila, impatient, and suspicious of treachery, decided to carry on by himself, evidently counting on forcing the Marqués into taking a stand. At the moment, however, when the plot was to be sprung, Don Alonso fell seriously ill, and nothing came of it. It seems to be certain that, if at any time during 1565 or 1566 the Marqués had said the word, nothing could have saved New Spain from civil war and possible independence. But success required intelligence and audacity, qualities which the Marqués had not inherited along with his father's name and title.

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[1] The establishment of an Indian nobility, with the titles and privileges of Spanish nobles, had been proposed twenty-five years before by Viceroy Mendoza as a means of tying the native ruling class firmly to the Spanish crown. His recommendation was not accepted, as it was considered too dangerous, but the policy of recognizing Indian hierarchies in local government had somewhat the same effect.

It was not until July 16, 1566, when the leadership conspiracy had virtually died a-borning, that the Audiencia plucked up enough nerve to face the issue. Even so, the oidores did not dare come out in the open. By a ruse they got the Marqués to attend one of their sessions. When he was safely inside, the doors were locked, and he was put under arrest. At the same time the Dávila brothers were seized by a squad of catchpoles and thrown into prison. The panic which immediately took possession of the other conspirators led to a general rush on their part to denounce one another before the Audiencia. Thus fortified, that body tried the Dávila brothers for high treason, and they were beheaded with fitting solemnity in the public square of Mexico City on October 3, 1566.

The terrible fate of the two young men (they were twenty-five and twenty-six) shook New Spain to its foundations. The Audiencia, frightened at its own boldness and at the general indignation of the public, took cover and delayed the prosecution of the rest of the conspirators. Meanwhile, the appearance of a new viceroy, Don Gastón de Peralta, put the Audiencia in an embarrassing position. While still at Vera Cruz Peralta had made up his mind that the danger had been greatly exaggerated. Upon reaching the capital he dismissed the heavy guard which the Audiencia had stationed at the palace and generally treated the whole affair as a boyish prank. The Audiencia was in a very bad light, and its predicament was further heightened by Peralta's insisting that the Marqués be sent back to Spain for trial, with the obvious implication that he would not receive a fair hearing before the Audiencia. Both the Audiencia and the viceroy hastened to patch their fences with the Council of the Indies by sending back reports of the matter. That of the viceroy was seized at Vera Cruz by an agent of the Audiencia, and the Council received a highly colored account of the conspiracy, together with a thoroughly false accusation against Peralta. The viceroy was charged, among other things, with having raised an army of *30,000* men, with the evident intent of carrying out the plot on his own account.

It took little to arouse the suspicions of Philip II, and here was evidence of a full-fledged rebellion against his divine authority, and no defense from the viceroy. The situation called for the most violent measures. Philip picked out his toughest judge, one Licenciado Alonso de Muñoz, and sent him to new Spain armed with the terrible power of taking over every branch of the government and doing the king's justice by his own hand.

Muñoz arrived at Mexico City early in October, 1567. He was the embodiment of everything sinister in the Oriental despotism of Philip II. His ferocious sadism thrived on blood. He was the Judge Jeffreys of New Spain. For six dreadful months his minions, operating in secrecy, entered the homes and seized the persons of all whom the breath of suspicion touched. The prisons of the capital were immediately crowded to suffocation with his victims, and more prisons had to be built—airless dungeons which for a century afterward bore the hated name of Muñoz. Scaffolds were erected and the headsman's axe bit deep into the bluest blood of New Spain, until it began to appear that Muñoz intended to wipe out a whole class. The trials were a farce. To be accused was to be condemned. There was no appeal from the mad Muñoz. This was his hour, and woe to those who stood above the crowd!

The most famous and pathetic episode of the reign of terror was the trial of Don Martín Cortés, the scapegoat mestizo half-brother of the Marqués. Powerless to touch the latter, who was safely in Spain, Muñoz vented his ferocity on Don Martín. This brave and unfortunate man stood fast where so many of his companions had bought their safety by betrayal. He was put to the torture of water and the cord, but in his agony refused to divulge the names of his companions. The record of his torture for January 7, 1568, after six pitchers of water had been forced down his throat, ends with an admirable bit of understatement. "And in this condition, the said Don Martín being ill..., and since it was evident that he was fatigued by the torture, it was ordered suspended, to be repeated if it seemed best.... And the said torture was suspended this day at about nine o'clock of the morning."

Nothing whatever was proved against Don Martín, but the suspicion against him was so strong that he was condemned to perpetual banishment, on pain of death if he should return, and to a fine of a thousand pesos. Incidentally, there is no evidence that the sentence was executed. The only record of the shadowy and tragic figure of the first mestizo, after his torture, shows him imprisoned in his own house a few months later, after which he disappears from history.

The disgusting conduct of Muñoz aroused fear and resentment to such a pitch that a full account of his atrocities was soon in the king's hands. To Philip's credit he immediately reversed himself and sent two commissioners to New Spain in a fast dispatch boat. These two men, the oidores Puga and Villanueva, proceeding with the utmost secrecy, surprised Muñoz in his quarters in the Dominican convent and read him the king's order, which allowed him three hours in which to leave the city. Thereupon the terrible visitor and his assistant, in imminent danger of their lives from the outraged populace, slipped out of the city on foot like a couple of criminals. Poetic justice was further served by their having to return to Spain in the same boat with the deposed viceroy. At court Philip received Peralta with marked condescension, but, when it came the turn of Muñoz, the king spoke one short sentence: "I sent you to New Spain to govern, not to destroy!" Muñoz was found in his room the next morning, dead.

The Marqués del Valle spent several years in prison. There was not enough evidence to convict him of treason, and he was finally let off with a fine of 50,000 pesos. A personal "loan" of 100,00 more to the king helped to erase the suspicion of disloyalty. Neither the Marqués nor any of his descendants came back to New Spain. He is the least attractive figure of the tragedy.

The abortive conspiracy of the Dávila brothers was the dying flicker of military feudalism in New Spain for a long time to come. From then on the sons of the conquerors counted for little, and they became a superfluous and idle anachronism. What ailed the second generation? With their wealth, numbers, and influence they had a fair chance of success. They seem to have been paralyzed by some sort of slow poison. They could not make up their minds, and they frittered away precious time until they were unable to avoid the awful vengeance of the king. Their fathers, with a fraction of their strength, had carried through the most audacious conquest in history. Something had been lost in those forty years, spirit or vision, or it may be that men fighting merely to preserve inherited wealth and privilege lack conviction, or that a life of well-fed ease destroys military virtues. However it was, the sons of the conquerors were soon replaced by vigorous and hard-handed men, who wrested fortunes from mines and commerce, and who in their turn left sons to squander their wealth.

An epoch ended in 1568. Back in Spain the crisis had the effect of making Philip II see the danger of turning loose upon the dominions visitors with unlimited powers. He chose the next viceroy with care, and the prudent and intelligent Don Martín Enríquez de Almanza was allowed to enjoy a long and undisturbed reign of peace and construction, a work in which all classes joined with thanksgiving. The Silver Age was at hand.

Chapter XII

THE SILVER AGE

How SHALL WE measure the weight of time? How make clear the deep mark of its pressure on the habits of mankind? How, to be specific, shall we gauge the effect of the two hundred and fifty years and more of what I have termed the Silver Age in New Spain? Even within the narrow and arbitrary limits which I have set, say, from 1570 to 1821, it spanned a mighty period. At its beginning soldiers were still debating the merits of the crossbow against the clumsy and newfangled arquebus; at its end steamboats were plying the Hudson.

During that long age the Invincible Armada of King Philip of Spain was defeated by the English Channel and the heavy guns of Elizabeth's seadogs; Shakespeare and Milton wrote; the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock; Newton and Descartes blew to bits a comfortable world built upon established authority; Cromwell led the middle class of England against an outworn despotism; the Glorious Revolution enthroned Common Sense; the Sun King reigned interminably in France; Voltaire laughed the Old Régime to death; Rousseau poured out the heady liquor of the Rights of Man; the tinsel court of Louis the Unlucky ended on the guillotine; Napoleon collected crowns and set the pattern for a new breed of earth-shakers. Across the sea a young republic chanted somewhat noisily the glories of Liberty, while Whitney's cotton gin double-riveted the fetters of black men, and land-hungry pioneers drove West over the ruins of once-free Indian nations. And all this long while the people of New Spain were born and died, lived and mated, built and delved, and began to forge a new race behind the bulwark of Spain's might and the Atlantic Ocean. Two hundred and fifty years!

* * *

The Silver Age was literally the age of silver. The little metal disks which some thousands of years ago were invented to facilitate trade in time took on a virtue of their own, and mankind became obsessed with the notion that they were wealth in themselves. The fortunate possessors of gold and silver could enjoy power and material comforts denied to the ordinary run of mortals. The pawnbroker and the banker could command kings and armies. To discover new sources of the magic metals became the consuming desire of noble and commoner. Their quest fired men to unheard-of efforts in exploring the ends of the earth. Every discoverer and explorer of the New World reflected the thirst for the precious metals which was devouring Europe. Europe had become a trading society; trade depended upon the precious metals; there was not enough currency to meet the need; and paper money had not been invented.

As it turned out, the Kingdom of New Spain contained an inexhaustible reservoir of silver. A mint was established in Mexico City in 1535, and a thin trickle of silver coins began to flow to Europe. In 1557 the quicksilver amalgam process greatly cheapened the cost of separation, and the flow of coins grew to a torrent and inundated the world. "Pieces-of-eight! Pieces-of-eight! Pieces-of-eight!" The chant of John Silver's parrot echoed the chant of mankind. The clumsy wooden machinery of the Casa de Moneda stamped out bright Spanish dollars year in and year out. That single mint produced some *two billion dollars*, in a world which still counted in pennies. Two billions more were exported in bars, and another billion or so was contributed by Peru. Two-thirds of the entire silver production of the world were eventually exported from the port of Vera Cruz. The single *real de minas* of Zacatecas is credited with having yielded a fifth of the world's silver before the nineteenth century.

The treasure of the Indies was the vortex in which the economy of Europe whirled for three hundred years. It did not occur to anyone that the stream of treasure and the increasing poverty of Spain had anything to do with each other. As early as 1520 the people of Seville were rioting against the rising cost of bread, and by the end of that century a mechanic's wages or a farmer's income would no longer support life. Industry was destroyed, the cities filled up with hungry beggars, and thousands upon thousands of men and women who had no place in the world sought refuge in convents.

The ambitions of Charles V and Philip II rested upon the assumption that they could buy their way to greatness with the treasure of the Indies. When it proved insufficient they taxed the country to suffocation and mortgaged the income of the state for generations to come. Philip II paid interest to the Genoese bankers to the tune of eighteen per cent. The later Hapsburgs sold titles wholesale and created an upstart nobility of money. They peddled to the highest bidder every office from viceroy to village scribe, while justice was bought and sold like any other commodity. Disillusionment and cynicism replaced the crusading spirit of Isabella. Don Quixote awoke from his dream.

"At length he wak'd, and with a loud Voice, Blessed be the Almighty, cry'd he, for this great Benefit He has vouchsafed to do me! Infinite are His Mercies; they are greater, and more in Number than the Sins of Men. The Niece hearkening very attentively to these Words of her Uncle, and finding more Sense in them than there was in his usual Talk, at least since he had fallen ill; What do you say, Sir, said she, has any Thing extraordinary happen'd? What Mercies are these you mention? Mercies, answer'd he, that

Heaven has this Moment vouchsafed to shew me, in spite of all my Iniquities. My Judgment is return'd clear and undisturbed, and that Cloud of Ignorance is now remov'd, which the continual reading of those damnable Books of Knight-Errantry had cast over my Understanding."

Society and the public service became so corrupt that thoughtful men saw nothing ahead but final dissolution, and the great Quevedo dipped his pen in bile and wrote:

Sir Money is a doughty knight!
Mother, I bow to Milord Money;
He is my lover and my honey;
His passion is indeed so burning
That he is pale from constant yearning;
And since, although he wants in size,
Milord my every wish complies,
Sir Money is a doughty knight!

Well born of Indies' noble blood,
While all the world in homage stood,
He cometh home to Spain to die,
But buries his bones in Italy.
... ...
He is a gallant, shining fellow,
Although his color runs to yellow;
His value is beyond all doubt
In Christian or in Moorish bout;
And since the noble and the lout
Are equal in his lordly sight,
Sir Money is a doughty knight!

Spain's admiring rivals in Europe, never suspecting her disease, hung on her flanks like a pack of wolves, greedy for a share in the spoils. Anti-Spanish propaganda, embittered by the religious conflict, had the very practical purpose of rationalizing the grabbing of treasure. Las Casas' *Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies* was the most widely translated book of its day, while Thomas Gage's *English American* was written to justify Cromwell's seizure of the

Spanish dominions. An undeclared war was waged against Spain from the beginning. A long line of famous "pirates" became the heroes of their respective countries. Hawkins, Frobisher, Drake, Morgan, and a host of others kept the Spanish authorities in a continuous state of nerves and occasionally inflicted heavy losses. In 1628, for instance, the Dutch pirate, Piet Heyn, seized the whole Spanish fleet off the Bahamas, with a cargo of twelve million pieces-of-eight. Heyn was ennobled by the grateful Dutch government and lived to become the scourge of the English during Cromwell's protectorship. Legalized piracy did not go out of fashion until the eighteenth century, when the merchants of England discovered that it was more profitable to smuggle goods in exchange for silver. The treasure of the Indies played a major part in the birth of Europe's modern age, and great segments of its population, fleeing the unbearable depression, migrated to America and began the slow building of what was to become the United States. Pieces-of-eight!

In New Spain silver was king. To increase its production was the first duty of every viceroy. About the mines stately cities sprang up, with a large and industrious populace. The people of the new cities had to be fed, and agriculture flourished in their neighborhood. The greatest mining camp of all was Mexico City. Long trains of mules laden with silver bars unloaded at the Casa de Moneda. Where the treasure was, there the power gathered also. The capital was the goal of ambition and the refuge of the disinherited, who flocked in to live like rats on the refuse and alms of the rich.

A silver nobility appeared in New Spain, complete with purchased titles and shaky coats of arms. Antonio Obregón spent a few thousand of the two hundred million pesos he took out of the Valenciana mine at Guanajuato and became the Conde de Valenciana. Jesús Salado went him one better and became the Conde de Matehuapile and the Marqués de Guadiana. The Marqués de Aguayo, the Marqués de Mal Paso, the Conde de Regla, the Marqués de Apartado, the Marqués de Vivanco, the Marqués de Jaral, the Conde de Santiago—such were some of the dignities bought by the miners from the bankrupt crown, together with the privilege of painting a crest on their carriages and having their ears titillated by a murmured "Señor Marqués" or "Señor Conde."

The grateful and pious miners lavished their riches on the Church in propitiatory offerings, until the churches and cathedrals of New Spain were incrusted with the precious metals. The new aristocracy of silver had to be housed and clothed befittingly. Their palaces studded the capital; their taste for luxuries brought galleons from China laden with silks, jewels, brocades, ivory, and spices. Their ready alms supported an army of professional beggars of all classes. The magnificence of their habits and the splendor of their households transcended vulgarity. They struck the very English Thomas Gage in much the same way in which the riches of Rome must have affected the barbarians.

"In my time [1625]," he wrote, "[Mexico City] was thought to be of between thirty and forty thousand inhabitants, Spaniards, who are so proud and rich that half the city was judged to keep coaches, for it was a most credible report that in Mexico in my time there were above fifteen thousand coaches. It is a by-word that at Mexico there are four things fair, that is to say, the women, the apparel, and the horses, and the streets. But to this I may add the beauty of some of the coaches of the gentry, which do exceed in cost the best of the Court of Madrid and other parts of Christendom; for there they spare no silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, nor cloth of gold, nor the best silks of China to enrich them. And to the gallantry of their horses the pride of some doth add the cost of bridles and shoes of silver.

"The streets of Christendom must not compare with those in breadth and cleanness, but especially in the riches of the shops which do adorn them. Above all, the goldsmiths' shops and works are to be admired. The Indians, and the people of China that have been made Christians and every year come thither, have perfected the Spaniards in that trade. The viceroy that went thither the year 1625 caused a popinjay to be made of silver, gold, and precious stones, with the perfect colour of the popinjay's feathers (a bird bigger than a pheasant), with such exquisite art and perfection, to present unto the King of Spain, that it was prized to be worth in riches and workmanship half a million of ducats. There is in the cloister of the Dominicans a lamp hanging in the church with three hundred branches wrought in silver to hold so many candles, besides a hundred little lamps for oil..., every one being made with several workmanship so exquisitely that it is valued to be worth four hundred thousand ducats; and with such-like curious works are many streets made more rich and beautiful from the shops of the goldsmiths....

"Both men and women are excessive in their apparel, using more silks than stuffs and cloth. Precious stones and pearls further much this their vain ostentation; a hat-band and rose made of diamonds in a gentleman's hat is common, and a hat-band of pearls is common in a tradesman; nay a blackamoor or tawny young maid and slave will make hard shift but she will be in fashion with her neckchain and bracelets of pearls, and her ear-bobs of some considerable jewels....

"There are not above fifty churches and chapels, cloisters and nunneries, and parish churches in that city; but those that are there are the fairest that ever my eyes beheld, the roofs and beams being in many of them all daubed with gold, and many altars with sundry marble pillars, and others with brazil-wood stays standing one above another, with tabernacles for several saints richly wrought with golden colours, so that twenty thousand ducats is a common price of many of them...."

The capital was a city of violent contrasts. The silver-incrusted coaches of the rich plowed their way through crowds of drunken and debased Indians, Negroes, mulattos, and mestizos, who lived by begging in the daytime and by thievery at night. They were the army of the disinherited, expressively called *léperos,* whose control was an all but insoluble problem for the police. According to the most accepted theory, the léperos were the result of pulque. The evidence was certainly strong enough, save that cause and effect were reversed. Drink was the only escape of the lépero, and the pennies he could beg or steal speedily found their way into the pockets of the pulqueros. Fortunes were made (and are still made) by thus debauching the people. Early in the seventeenth century it was estimated there were fifteen hundred pulquerías in the capital alone.

The intolerable nuisance and the danger from unrestricted drinking led to a series of edicts which recall the abortive attempts to enforce prohibition in this country. One such edict reduced the number of pulquerías in the capital to a hundred and fifty, each of which was to be operated by an old woman of proven virtue. She might sell pure pulque (*pulque blanco*) but no spirits or Spanish wines. A white man who adulterated pulque, or who otherwise violated the edict, could be heavily fined and sent to the galleys, while the luckless mestizo or mulatto who did the same might suffer mutilation or death. Indians were let off with a sound beating—the universal remedy for all their shortcomings. But there was too much money invested in the traffic, the government's income from it was too great, and the populace was too addicted to pulque, for the ordinances to have any appreciable effect. Their constant repetition is sufficient proof of their sterility. Mobs of drunken léperos were a continual menace to public safety, and they could always be counted on to loot and riot whenever the authorities weakened or some feud split the city. Two such riots, or *tumultos*, were grave enough to threaten the very existence of the state in the seventeenth century. They are worth considering in some detail, as they were symptomatic of the disease which was eating at the heart of New Spain.

Chapter XIII

TUMULT AND SHOUTING

Mexico City was the center of wealth and political power. It was also the battleground for the factions which were always ready to fly at each other's throats. The weakness of the Spanish government under the last three incompetent Hapsburgs and their venal favorites was reflected in the weakness of the viceregal government of New Spain. The Hapsburg machine was creaking with internal stresses. The vested interests began to cherish the notion of freedom from the restraining hand of the crown and whispered defiance of the government. An opportunity soon appeared to bring the struggle into the open.

The lack of definition between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions was one of the most prolific sources of trouble. It took a strong monarch to keep the peace between them. A row was almost inevitable when two such men as Archbishop Don Juan Pérez de la Serna and Viceroy the Marqués de Gelves ruled at the same time. Serna was a heavy-browed despot, who for years had run New Spain pretty much as he pleased, with no interference from the easy-going Marqués de Guadalcázar, viceroy from 1612 to 1621. In the latter year Gelves took over. He was an able and vigorous officer, but otherwise was afflicted with the same harsh and uncompromising temper as the archbishop.

From the moment Gelves landed at Vera Cruz he set about cleaning up the appalling internal conditions left by Guadalcázar. One of the most urgent needs was to free the country from the swarms of bandits who infested every road. Gelves organized small companies to run them down, and, thanks to his energy, within three years most of the robbers had turned to more peaceful trades, while the bodies of others swung by the hundred from crossroads gibbets. A notorious abuse which had been allowed to go unchecked in the capital was the practice of certain alcaldes mayores and other officials of buying up the grain supply and holding it for famine prices, while the public granaries (*alhóndígas*), which were meant to prevent just such a situation, were allowed to fall into disuse. The viceroy attacked the problem with characteristic vigor, arresting on the charge of malfeasance one of the principal offenders, one Don Melchor Pérez de Varáez, knight of Santiago and corregidor of the province of Metepec. At the same time Gelves undertook to break the grain monopoly by purchasing 10,000 *fanegas* of maize and dumping it on the market.

These measures threatened the privileges of a whole class (mostly the wealthy Creoles) and raised up against the viceroy a host of enemies, for no one knew where his foolish rage for reform was going to stop. Even so Gelves might have prevailed if he had not made the mistake of including in his reform certain irregularities of the archbishop, the most notorious of which was the operation of a private slaughter house in the archepiscopal palace. The slaughter house may not have done any harm, but it violated a strict law which put the meat supply of every community under license. Gelves wrote the archbishop a sharp note begging him to desist from the practice. Serna took the viceroy's action as a direct invasion of his rights, and he forthwith became the head of the growing faction whose privileges were under fire. Gelves, for his part, showed a positive genius for making enemies. One day at a function in the cathedral he seated the members of the city council below certain of the royal officers and so mortally wounded their Creole pride that they walked out in a body. Instead of overlooking this bit of peevishness, Gelves took it as an insult to the throne and had all the offenders thrown in jail.

The city was split wide open: Creoles against Spaniards, secular priests against friars, most of the population against the viceroy, and the léperos ready to join any movement which promised excitement, drink, and booty. Every lawsuit and petty dispute became a political issue, and nothing was debated on its merits. The focus of the row was the trial of the grafting corregidor of Metepec. After months of accusation and counter-accusation, the Audiencia found him guilty and sentenced him to a fine of 70,000 pesos. Dismay and fury cemented the archbishop's party. It was resolved to break Gelves.

To insure payment of his fine, Varáez was confined at the Dominican convent under guard. The convent was an immense building, and the hospitable friars allowed the guard to take up its quarters inside. Here was the opening for which the archbishop was waiting, for was not the guard violating the right of sanctuary? He ordered the provisor of the convent to expel the guard; the point was argued up and down, and the upshot of it was that the guard stayed, at the viceroy's order. Serna then went into action and blasted the viceroy, the trial judges, and even the soldiers of the guard with an excommunication. An *escándalo!* A dog of an excommunicate was in the palace! The archbishop's notary led a group of priests in an attack on a constable. The viceroy retaliated by sending the notary to the fortress prison of San Juan de Ulúa. More excommunications. The viceroy appealed to the apostolic judge. The judge ordered Serna to withdraw the excommunications. Serna refused. He not only refused; he locked up every church in the capital and laid the whole city under an interdict.

Now an interdict was the most awful weapon in the arsenal of the Church. All services, all sacraments were suspended. The bells tolled night and day as for the dead, and the terrible ceremony of anathema was read from the pulpit of the cathedral. The city was under a curse. The dying could not even receive the final comfort of extreme unction and must go before their Maker with their sins fresh upon them. The interdict was a command to the faithful to rise and smite down the enemy of God. Funeral processions bearing lighted candles wended their lugubrious way through the city streets, and the dread edict was posted on the door of every church for all to see.

The apostolic judge ordered the rebellious archbishop to lift the interdict, and himself suspended the excommunications. Finding himself blocked by the judge and the viceroy, the archbishop retaliated by stopping the tolling of the bells, and the sudden silence was even more frightening than the noise had been. Then it was that Serna decided on a last desperate move. Without his customary ceremonials he went before the Audiencia in the guise of a humble suppliant for justice. His act had been well advertised, and a large crowd of partisans and léperos gathered before the palace. The Audiencia, badly scared by the demonstration, ordered him to leave. The archbishop refused. Then the Audiencia was forced into the position which must have been calculated by Serna. He was put under arrest, sentenced to pay a fine of 4000 ducats, and banished from New Spain. The news was greeted with a roar of defiance from the crowd outside. Nevertheless, the archbishop was escorted to San Juan Teotihuacán under guard. Once there, he fired an excommunication at the entire government and sat down to await developments.

The government, however, had no intention of allowing the archbishop to remain within striking distance of the capital, and ordered him to continue to Vera Cruz. His escort prepared his carriage. Several officers entered the church to notify his Eminence that it was time to go, and were met by their prisoner with the Host in his hands. No priest could be touched while in his sacred office, and the guard had to retire. The comedy was repeated until the guard gave up in disgust.

Back in the capital the archbishop's party was busy. Rumors were circulated that the high price of grain was the viceroy's doing. Priests posted up excommunications, and the partisans of Varáez held daily councils of war. The square was never free of angry crowds. The Audiencia weakened under the attack and lifted the decree of banishment against the archbishop. Gelves, however, was not to be intimidated, and his evil genius made him commit the last folly of throwing the whole Audiencia in jail for exceeding their powers. The new scandal brought a roaring crowd to the palace. It was ordered to disperse, refused, and two Indians were seized and flogged as an example to the rest.

On top of it all the archbishop, from his haven at Teotihuacán, blasted the city with a new interdict. The churches were again closed, and the bells resumed their tolling. The mob boiled. A secretary of the Audiencia tried to push his way through and was roundly cursed. His escort undertook to punish the offenders. Rocks flew, and the great tumulto of 1624 was on.

Led by a priest on horseback, the rioters pulled up the paving stones of the square and showered them at the windows of the palace, shouting "Long live Christ! Long live the king! Death to the heretic! Death to the excommunicate!" The call to arms was blown by the trumpeter of the palace guard, but the militia did not appear. The mob yelled for the release of the Audiencia, and the viceroy made one gesture of appeasement by liberating the judges and allowing them to show themselves at the windows. It was too late, and the gesture was futile in any case, for the leaders of the riot were out to destroy him. These leaders were the priests, the Creole citizenry, and the city council itself, which was still smarting from the viceroy's insult. One of its members was so carried away by his enthusiasm that he got out the city banner and led the mob in person.

The doors of the Dominican convent were battered down, and Varáez was carried off in triumph. The hated *gachupines*, as the Spaniards were called, were too frightened to show themselves. The only active friends the viceroy had were the Franciscans, who paraded through the square and persuaded some of the mob to follow them off. But the rioters were back the same day armed with heavy beams to batter down the doors of the palace, which done, they roared through the courts, opened the jail, and set fires, while a priest, mounted on a table in the square, offered absolution to all who should fight against the heretic. The Audiencia by this time had escaped from the palace and joined the archbishop's party. They demanded Gelves' surrender and announced his deposition. To give their demand more weight, armed men were posted on the surrounding roof-tops and sniped at the palace guard. With the palace burning over him and his men dying, Gelves saw that further resistance was useless, and escaped in disguise to the Franciscan convent.

By January 16 the disgraceful affair was over. The archbishop had won out over the government of his king, as had the crooked bureaucrats and their friends. The glad tidings were sped to Teotihuacán, and his Eminence was escorted back to the capital by an admiring crowd. All the bells of the city were turned loose in a deafening welcome. Satan had been vanquished. The interdict was lifted, as well as the excommunications—all save that of the viceroy. The grafting corregidor was whitewashed by the same judges who had convicted him, and was allowed to return to Metepec, presumably to carry on his profitable speculations in grain. Gelves was confined in the Franciscan convent under heavy guard, which oddly did not violate sanctuary, and, after long and futile negotiations, was allowed to return to Spain—not, however, before the Audiencia had sent a long account of the matter to the Council of the Indies. The archbishop could not have felt altogether easy about his share in the riot, to judge by his action, for a month later he accepted a handsome donation made by his flock and went to Spain, there to be coldly received by the king and never allowed to return.

The Council of the Indies was not taken in by the representations of the Audiencia, and in November of the same year a new viceroy, the Marqués de Cerralvo, landed in Vera Cruz, accompanied by the expected and dreaded royal visitor, in this case the inquisitor of Valladolid, Don Martín Carrillo. For two years Carrillo made a quiet and thorough investigation of the famous riot, but his mildness was such that one cannot help speculating on what would have happened if Philip II had been alive. Only four leaders of the mob were executed. Five of the priests implicated in it fled to Spain, but were caught and sentenced to the galleys. Two of the oidores of the Audiencia lost their jobs. The Marqués de Gelves, on the other hand, was exonerated and returned to an honorable career in the service of the king.

The lesson of the great tumulto of 1624 is best given in the words of the visitor. "[The tumulto shows] three facts of great importance to the Spanish government: first, the conspiracy was organized, directed, and led by the clergy, that is to say, by the class believed at court to be the principal and most firm support of the government of the mother country; second, if the matter were followed through it would be found that all, or almost all, the populace were accomplices; third, the hatred of the domination by the mother country, and especially by the Spaniards who come to establish themselves in Mexico City, is deeply rooted in all classes of society, and was one of the principal means used to excite the masses to action."

Carrillo anticipated by two centuries the motives of the wars of independence.

* * *

Sixty-eight years later Mexico City was threatened with destruction by another tumulto. The riot of 1692 had very different causes. The rainy season of 1691 had been marked by a series of disastrous floods. One storm lasted for two weeks. The entire wheat crop and half the maize crop were destroyed. Crop failures meant hunger and high prices. The public granary established in 1583 could not meet the heavy demand made upon it. Famine was abroad and, justly or unjustly, the government was blamed for everything. The Conde de Galve, then viceroy, sent agents about the country to make a survey of the grain supply, and it was whispered that they were buying up stocks in order further to raise prices. The general discontent was sharpened by the faulty system of distribution at the granary, where women were allowed to crowd to suffocation and to fight for places. The officials in charge could think of no better method of control than to beat them.

Popular irritation was brought to a head on Sunday, June 8, 1692, when an Indian woman got trampled at the granary. She was picked up by a crowd of angry Indians and brought to the archbishop's palace. When his Eminence could not be found they brought her to the government palace and demanded to see the viceroy. Unable to penetrate into the quarters where they believed he was hiding, the Indians grew more and more excited and began to throw stones. The guard drove them away from the doors, but the rioters gathered reinforcements and returned to the attack, killing two soldiers and forcing the rest inside.

"Long live the king! Death to the cuckold gachupines! Death to the viceroy! Death to the corregidor!" The shrieks of the mob were punctuated by the thud of paving stones against the palace doors. The rioters soon got the idea that it would be a good thing to sack the mint. The myriad stalls of the marketplace supplied fuel for the fires laid against the doors. The ranks were constantly swelled by more Indians, léperos, half-castes, and riff-raff from the slums, until the square was choked with ten thousand yelling men and women. Some attempted to scale the balconies of the palace and were shot down by the soldiers. According to Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, a professor at the University and himself a horrified witness of the riot, "There were so many people, not only Indians, but of all castes, the shouts and roaring were so loud, and the rain of rocks which fell upon the palace so heavy, that the noise they made at the doors and windows exceeded that of a hundred drums beaten at once. The few who were not in the square waved their blankets as they were banners and threw their hats in the air, others mocked, and the Indians supplied stones to all with unwonted diligence."

His Eminence the archbishop thought to quiet the tumulto by showing himself in the square. On the box of his carriage sat a lackey bearing the archepiscopal cross, but lackey and cross were knocked off by a well-aimed paving stone, and his Eminence retired. Friars, Jesuits, and secular priests were for once united. They paraded and exhorted, but met with the same reception.

The first object of the mob's fury was the gibbet and the stocks, which went up in flames, along with the carriage of the corregidor. Fire ate through the thick palace doors, and soon the inner compartments, the chambers of the Audiencia, and the jail were burning. The town hall was fired. The shops surrounding the square, particularly the wineshops and pulquerías, were looted, and the mob, now gloriously drunk, danced and howled in a frenzy. The respectable elements, thoroughly frightened, barricaded their houses. Toward evening groups of militia recovered somewhat from the general panic and began to fire on the crowd. At the same time the alcohol began to wear off and, at ten o'clock, when a party was sent by the viceroy to reconnoiter, it found the square completely deserted, save for the dead lying among the embers. The great tumulto of 1692 had burned out like a grass fire. It was the most expensive of such riots, the property damage being estimated at two million pesos. If the rioters had had a purpose and a leader nothing could have saved the city from destruction, but the government was to stand until the whites themselves should lead tumultos.

The gibbet and the stocks were soon rebuilt. A few ringleaders were strung up, one was burned alive, while the whipping-post and the stocks took care of the rank and file. There was much learned discussion about the cause of the tumulto and the prevention of its recurrence. The grain supply from the provinces was increased, and maize was distributed free to the poor. The sale of pulque was prohibited for a time. The Indians were restricted to their barrio of Taltelolco. A more adequate police was provided. In short, everything was done except to inquire into the reason for the huge slum population of Mexico City, and the léperos continued to lend picturesqueness, squalor, and disease to urban life, as they still do.

Chapter XIV

TRANSPORT

Before the Conquest and the introduction of pack animals into New Spain, all goods were transported on the backs of men. Among the Indians there existed a class of professional carriers, called *tamemes*, while every macehual toted his own provisions, tributes, and household goods. Indian merchants with their trains of tamemes covered the country from Sinaloa to Nicaragua, respected everywhere even by warring nations. The conquistadores made use of great numbers of tamemes to transport military supplies. The brigantines with which Cortés annihilated the Aztec naval power on Lake Texcoco were carried by the Indians from Tlaxcala. His ships were carried in pieces across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and launched in the Pacific.

The Spanish missionaries, who were prone to be shocked by everything that differed from European usage, were loud in the denunciation of the use of God's creatures as beasts of burden. They had plenty of reason to protest as far as the Spaniards were concerned. In the early years the conquistadores and miners drove the tamemes beyond endurance. Many thousands were pressed into the carrier service, and their bones lay in whitening heaps along the roads to the mines. Bishop Zumárraga included a note on tamemes in his famous letter of August 27, 1529.

"The Indians are very badly used by Spanish travelers, who take them, laden like pack animals and even without feeding them, wherever they wish to go, and for this reason the Indians suffer great harm and even die along the road. It is worst among the gold miners, who load the Indians they have in encomienda and send them thus laden thirty, forty, or fifty leagues, more or less, and many die on the way. I have in mind one province called Tepeaca [in the present state of Puebla], . . . from which it is said that more than three thousand free men, by the account of the cacique of that place, have died on the road from carrying supplies to the mines."

Remedial legislation, as usual, was principally noteworthy for its lack of realism. The use of tamemes by the Spaniards was by turns prohibited, allowed, regulated, and the question was finally abandoned, as the introduction of pack animals solved the worst abuses. There were many regions, however, which were either too poor to support animals, or too inaccessible to allow their use. San Ildefonso (Villa Alta, Oaxaca) for many years could be approached only by foot trails and continued to be served by tamemes.

A century after Zumárraga's protest Thomas Gage found the carrier system working apparently undiminished in Guatemala. "So likewise are they [the Indians] in a slavish bondage and readiness for all passengers and travelers, who in any town may demand unto the next town as many Indians do go with his mules, or to carry on their backs a heavy burden as he shall need. . . . A *petaca*, or leathern trunk, and chest of above a hundredweight, they will make those wretches to carry on their backs a whole day, nay, some two and three days together, which they do by tying the chest on each side with ropes, having a broad leather in the middle, which they cross over the forepart of their head, or over their forehead, hanging thus the weight upon their heads and brows, which at their journey's end hath made the blood stick in the foreheads of some, galling and pulling off the skin, and marking them in the fore-top of their heads, who as they are called *tamemez,* so are easily known in a town by their baldness, that leather girt having worn off all their hair."

In its attempted regulation of the use of Indian carriers the Council of the Indies was up against geography, economics, and, the toughest problem of all, Indian costumbre. Although the Indians readily accepted pack animals when they could get them, tamemes continued to be used everywhere. In 1840 John Stephens used native pack trains to traverse the back country of Chiapas and Yucatan, and on one occasion was horrified by being carried himself in a chair over the mountains on the back of an Indian. Every traveler in Mexico and Central America today sees Indian carriers competing with pack animals and motor trucks. In Guatemala it is considered a mark of virility to be able to carry a heavier pack than one's neighbor, and competition among boys is so strenuous that it frequently leads to hernia.

Transport in New Spain, as it is in present-day Mexico, was one of the most vital and difficult problems of government and economy. From the opening chapter of this volume one might get the impression that it was all but insoluble, but necessity and ingenuity partially overcame the formidable obstacles offered by the terrain. The transport of silver, quicksilver, lead, and other supplies for the mines, and the heavy demands of commerce and the military, forced the government to open many roads. In most cases its work was simplified by the existence of ancient Indian trails, which spread like a spider web in all directions from the capital. A great many of them were not roads in any sense that we should recognize, being mere mule and donkey tracks. The only carriage and wagon roads were the vital artery over the violent eastern escarpment to Vera Cruz and those over the easy gradients of the plateau which connected the city with the principal mining centers to the west and north. The rest of the terrain was too difficult for wheels to negotiate.

Freighting became a huge and profitable enterprise. Rates were so high that European goods brought three to four times their price in Spain. To supply animals for transport developed into another large industry. Certain Indian communities, such as Chiapas, became expert breeders and trainers of mules, while every town of any size had a barrio where the mule trains (*recuas*) stopped. These barrios were carefully avoided by peaceful and respectable citizens.

The free life of the road attracted vagabond spirits of every color and degree of mixture–skillful, tough, fond of drink and women, happy-go-lucky, dangerous in a brawl, and profane beyond description. Indians and mestizos took to the life as a duck takes to water, and their morals were such that scandalized pastors along the roads kept up a continual lament. The most famous muleteer (*arriero*) of all time, however, was a woman, Doña Catalina de Erazu, better known in folklore as the Nun Ensign.

Rebelling against the discipline of her convent, where a pious family had mistakenly made her take the veil, Catalina adopted man's attire and swashbuckled her way from Spain to Peru and Chile. She became famous as a swordsman. Serving now as arriero, now as soldier, her duelling and killing kept her continually in hot water with the authorities, and on one occasion she escaped execution only by revealing that she was a woman, a nun, and a virgin. Her case baffled the legal minds of Peru, and she was sent back to Spain for disposal. The Spanish authorities could find no precedent either, and she was turned over to the pope, who was so interested in her story that he gave her dispensation to wear man's clothing for the rest of her life. Philip IV granted her a pension of five hundred pesos a year from the bankrupt treasury. Doña Catalina came to New Spain about 1640, took up her old trade of arriero, and became the terror of the Vera Cruz road. Her career reached a fitting climax when she fell madly in love with the wife of a young hidalgo. When shown the door by the outraged husband, she salved her wounded honor by challenging him to mortal combat. The duel was prevented, and

Doña Catalina sulked back to her mules, dying in harness in 1650. Her escapades were so famous that three years after her death they appeared in the first American novel, *La Monja Alférez,* printed in Mexico in 1653.

Long transport trains had to be fed and their attendants housed. In the early days a train of mules and their drivers caused something like a famine in the Indian communities through which they passed. A system of *posadas,* or stopping places, was set up along the more frequented routes. The surrounding villages were obliged to supply them with fodder and food, while the town house (*casa de comunidad*) was used as a shelter by the arrieros. The Indians were supposed to be paid for such supplies and services, and in compensation were exempted from working in the repartimientos.

The system continued in operation until fairly modern times. Humboldt wrote of it: "The mestizoes and Indians engaged in freighting (preferring this life to sedentary occupations), spend their nights in the open or in the *casas de comunidad* built for the accommodation of travelers." John Stephens, stopping at the casa de comunidad of Chimalapa, Guatemala, in 1840, described it as it must have been for centuries: "This, besides being a town house, is a sort of caravansary or stopping place for travelers, being a remnant of Oriental usages still existing in Spain, and introduced into her former American possessions. It was a large building, situated on the plaza, plastered and whitewashed. At one end the alcalde was holding a sort of court, and at the other were the gratings of a prison. Between them was a room about thirty feet by twenty, with naked walls, and destitute of chair, bench, or table. The luggage was brought in, the hammocks hung up, and the alcalde sent me in my supper." Ordinarily Stephens stopped with the village priests, whose hospitality and good cheer he never tired of praising.

One of the charges regularly made against the Spanish administration in New Spain is that it neglected to build adequate roads. So it did, and so did every other government in the world up to the eighteenth century, when post roads and diligences came into general use. Even in the English colonies of North America traveling was an ordeal that few would willingly undergo. Although everyone complained of the discomfort and expense of traveling in New Spain, the cost of opening roads anywhere but in the flat places was so prohibitive that a general system covering the whole country was out of the question. Even now, with dynamite and modern machinery, road building in Mexico is such a difficult and costly business that many parts are shut off from the world.

Chapter XV

THE SECULAR CHURCH

The Silver Age in New Spain was pre-eminently the age of the secular Church. The friars had been the shock troops of the Conquest; the seculars were the army of occupation. Their duty was to strengthen the hand of the government in the difficult task of holding the loosely joined empire together. The first thing about the Spanish Church which must always be borne in mind is that *the Church was a State-Church, just as the state was a Church-State.* So intricately were the functions of the two interwoven that it is quite impossible to discover the fine line which divided one from the other. To understand the completeness of their fusion we must go back to the early Middle Ages, or even back to the time of the Emperor Constantine, when that sagacious ruler saw the need of replacing the anemic state religion of Rome by something more robust, and made Christianity the official religion of the empire. By his act the Christian priesthood became an essential part of the civil hierarchy.

The political function of the Church was reaffirmed in Spain when the semi-barbarous Visigoths, who had taken the country in the fifth century, finally realized that they had not the foggiest notion of how to run it, and had to accept, at a price, the help of the Spanish-Roman bishops. The bishops had been, in fact, the real rulers of Spain since the Romans had withdrawn. The price they exacted of their barbarian masters was the acceptance of Roman Catholicism as the state religion and the surrender of all real power into their hands. Thenceforth the Visigothic kings were little more than puppets; they had to accept anointment at the hands of the bishops before they could legally rule, and their legislative and administrative functions were taken over by a council dominated by churchmen. The pact between King Reccared and the Church was made at Toledo in 587.

In the nine centuries between the surrender of King Reccared and the discovery of America the relationship of Church and state was not always well understood, and kings often fell out with the priestly element, but of late it had grown very close indeed. Isabella the Catholic envisaged a new holy state, and she brought it into being with the help of such able churchmen as Tomás de Torquemada and Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros. In the ranks the priests played a part no less important. Through their work the long centuries of sporadic warfare between Christian and Moslem became a crusade to drive the infidel from the sacred soil of Spain. Bishops and priests fought side by side with Castilian warriors, more fanatical and, not infrequently, equally ferocious. Spain achieved nationhood through a *religious* war which embraced all classes.

The religious nature of the crusade was not always apparent, as Christian knights had no compunctions about hiring themselves out to Moslems when they needed the money—which was chronically—but in the conquest of Granada, personally directed by the astonishing Isabella, the religious aims were always in the foreground. The importance of that conquest for Christendom was so great that, in recognition of it, Isabella was granted by the Vatican the right to nominate men for all offices in the Spanish Church. That right was the so-called *real patronazgo*. By it every priest, from village curate to archbishop, became a salaried servant of the crown, bound by honor and interest to support it, particularly against the jealous and powerful feudal elements, which viewed with alarm the growing strength of Isabella's despotism.

The discovery of America occurred at the very moment when the energy and enthusiasm of Spain had become channelized under the direction of Isabella and her clerical army. Spain was a theocracy somewhat like that of the Hebrews under King David. To the queen, state and Church were merely different aspects of the same thing, and had one fundamental purpose, to establish on earth a Spanish City of God, with one monarch, one creed, and one way of life. Thus treason became heresy, and heresy treason. Isabella brought the terrible Inquisition to Spain to impose her ideals upon dissident minorities. "Spaniard" and "Christian" had to be synonymous. The Spaniards were the chosen people, and Isabella was their prophetess. The Church and the state were welded into one intricate machine; to touch either was to touch both.

The political function of the Church was perfectly understood by all Spanish monarchs from Isabella onward. It was to uphold the sanctity of the crown, to preach obedience to it, to chastise disobedience, and to act as an intelligence service, by which the crown might keep an eye on the volatile loyalty of its subjects. The seculars were necessarily the very backbone of conservatism. The crown favored them in every way. Service in the Church was made an attractive career for men of all classes. It was the ambition of every family, peasant or noble, to have a son in the priesthood, for honor and security, because the priest was frequently the support of a large number of brothers and sisters. The son of the peasant could usually aspire to be a parish priest, although there are many instances of able peasants who attained the highest ranks. The upper strata of the clergy were generally occupied by the sons of nobles. The Church of Spain was very like the Established Church of England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that is, in its political aspects.

It should be clear, then, why the viceroys of New Spain, from the time of Don Luis de Velasco, supported the seculars against the friars in the secularization of the Indian parishes, for the semi-feudal regular orders were an anachronism in the Hapsburg scheme, although they still had valuable work to do. The dangerous missions of the frontiers, such as those of Sonora and California, remained in their hands, and their large establishments in every part of New Spain continued to be a typical feature of colonial life. Generally speaking, however, the Silver Age was the age of the secular Church. The secular priest was the best insurance against the endemic tendency of Spaniards to make themselves independent. The authority of the crown was not to be seriously threatened, in fact, until the secular clergy themselves rebelled.

Every Indian village of any size supported a priest, who was the highest civil authority next to the usually distant corregidor or alcalde mayor. His immediate authority was almost absolute. Every self-respecting hacienda had a priest. Every *real de minas* had a priest, the larger ones many. Like all bureaucracies, the secular Church tended to divide and multiply. Large parishes were split into smaller ones, small parishes into still smaller ones, until, by the end of the Silver Age, there were over eight thousand secular priests in New Spain, and about the same number of regulars.

These men were supported by tithes (ten per cent of the income of the whites, and ten per cent of such crops of the Indians as had been introduced from Europe—usually limited to cattle, wheat, and silk), by salaries paid by encomenderos and hacendados, by gifts and bequests, by fees collected at marriages and burials, by the income from mortgages and other investments, and the like. *All the property of the Church, as well as that of individual clergymen, was exempt from taxes.* In the inevitable accumulation of three centuries a very large part of the real property of New Spain found its way into clerical hands. Lucas Alamán, himself a conservative Catholic, estimated that fully half the wealth of the country belonged to the clergy at the end of the Spanish régime.

The wealth of the clergy of New Spain has been a bitterly disputed subject for a century, both the liberals and the devout making such conflicting and extravagant statements about it that one cannot take them seriously. All the evidence at my disposal, however, points to its having been very great. There was no rule against the priest's engaging in money-making, and that he had ample opportunities for so doing, if he felt inclined, can hardly be doubted. That many priests did so is amply proved by the records of the General Indian Court, of which I append a few samples.

In 1629 the priest of Suchitepec was investigated by the Court for collecting two reales (a fourth of a peso) from all the married men of his parish to pay for masses on certain feast days, in default of which they were whipped or exposed in the stocks.

In 1631 the priest of Teococuilco died, after having served in that parish for thirty-five years. During all that time he had forced the Indians of his congregation to work for him without pay. He left a fortune of 200,000 pesos.

In 1639 the priest of Cuescomotepec was investigated for a long list of extortions. He obliged the Indians of his parish to bring him daily two cocks, two hens, two wax candles, two *almudes* (about half a bushel) of maize, one real of butter and chile, two reales of wood, twenty loads of hay (worth ten reales), two Indian women to make tortillas, a boy to care for his fifteen horses, and an Indian to work in his kitchen. He assessed each married man one real for masses; bachelors, widows, widowers, and unmarried women, half a real. He assessed the village five pesos (a week?) for wine. He obliged the Indians to work in his fields without pay. He borrowed money from their guild and never paid it back. Any complaint on their part was met by heavy beatings, exposure in the stocks, and imprisonment.

In 1654 the priest of Santa María Ocelotepec was forcing each of the villages of his parish to give him a pound of cochineal (worth twenty reales) during Lent; adults were obliged to confess at two reales a head; children, one real; each adult had to give him, besides, two almudes of maize; and during his absence from his home church he collected thirteen reales a day "salary." All these sums were extorted, the alternative being the whipping-post or the stocks.

In that same year the priest of Calpam was forcing each of his parishioners to bring a load of hay to Mass, or lose his blanket; each was obliged to confess during Lent at two reales a head; one Indian who had failed to turn over the alms of his guild was hung up in the church and whipped; another died from the beating he had received for disobedience; ten pesos were collected for the burial service (the legal tariff being four pesos).

The above are selected from a multitude of cases. It is not to be inferred that all priests were principally interested in making money, or that the seculars were unique, as the regulars sinned with approximate frequency. There were always quiet and godly men, who did their duty with no thought of self and gave their goods to the needy. But there was no adequate control over the priest who abused his power. Clerical immunity put him out of the reach of the civil authorities, and the worst thing that could happen to him for this kind of peccadillo was to be transferred to a leaner parish. There was a great difference, of course, between the incomes of those at the bottom and those at the top, but the humblest priest enjoyed economic advantages well above those of his parishioners.

In the vast estate known as the Marquesado de Aguayo, which covered 30,000 square miles in what is now the state of Coahuila, there were many haciendas, each with its chapel and its priest. The priest of the Hacienda de los Patos (near Parras) received a salary of 300 pesos a year in 1787, in addition to which he was given a farm to cultivate for his own profit, all his food, a servant, and all the fees for marriage, burial, and the like. The priest of San Esteban de Tlaxcala (Saltillo) earned 600 pesos a year above his expenses. Father Agustín de Morfi, who supplies these details, says of the priest at Santiago de Monclova: "The fertility of the land is proved by the fact that, although the curacy is worth only 2000 pesos a year (which do not pay the expenses of the priest's household), he has made a fortune of 80,000 pesos, and this in spite of the losses he has suffered at the hands of the Indians." This same priest, according to Vito Alessio Robles, lived to see Mexico independent, and when he died left an estate valued at 240,189 pesos.

It goes without saying that the priest shared the psychology of the landed class. Not infrequently he was a landlord himself, enjoying decided advantages over his lay competitors and employing their same methods. "Behind the chapel [of the Sanctuary of Guadalupe, Durango]," wrote Father Morfi, "is a spring of very good water, which used to be brought across the plain to irrigate a grove of poplars and to supply part of the city, but a priest bought a small farm in its vicinity and on his own authority cut the pipe in order to bring the water to his own land, thus depriving the city and the poplar grove of its benefits." The priest's responsibility in the hacienda, outside of his religious duties, was to induce obedience among the workers. So powerful was his voice that "labor troubles" were unusual, although it must be said to his credit that he was at times a moderating influence with his employer. This traditional role of the priest in the native village was still strong late in the nineteenth century. An official of a large American mining company told me that in the "good old days" of Díaz his first recourse in case of labor difficulties was to call in the priest to straighten things out, at a trifling cost in "alms."

Chapter XVI

EDUCATION AND LETTERS

If the Church entered into every phase of political and economic life in New Spain, in the field of education, from parish school to the University, the priest was supreme—as was the case, to be sure, throughout the western world. There were no less than forty colleges and seminaries in New Spain by the end of the Spanish régime. All of them were ecclesiastical, serving as training schools for the priesthood, but they also had a large enrollment of lay students preparing to enter the University. Before their expulsion in 1767 the Jesuits were supreme in the preparatory field, operating some twenty-three institutions, one of which, the College of St. Peter and St. Paul in Mexico City, competed with the University in influence, and was almost certainly superior to it in accomplishment. The granting of higher degrees, however, was a jealously guarded monopoly of the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico.

Founded in 1553 (some eighty-odd years before Harvard, as is always pointed out, for some reason), the University of Mexico was a faithful copy of the medieval University of Salamanca. Education, like political philosophy, was based upon an authoritarian concept of the universe. All knowledge was either revealed in the Scriptures, established by the Doctors of the Church, or handed down from the more respectable ancients, such as Aristotle and Galen. The "seven pillars" of learning were Theology, Scripture, Canon and Civil Law, the Decretals, Rhetoric, and the Arts (that is, Logic, Metaphysics, and Physics), all of which were taught in Latin, to keep the sacred precincts unpolluted by the vulgar. The highest chair, and the best paid, was that of Theology, the "mother of science," which was designed to "impugn, to destroy, to vanquish, and to extirpate that which does not conform to the Faith." The function of the University in the preservation of the accepted order of things is best illustrated by the Laws of the Indies: "In conformity with what has been disposed by the Holy Council of Trent, . . . those who in the universities of our Indies receive the degrees of Licenciado, Doctor, and Master shall be obliged to profess our Holy Catholic Faith, . . . and they shall also swear obedience [to us], and to our viceroys and audiencias in our name, and to the rectors of the University." No one might receive the degree of bachelor in Theology, or that of master or doctor in any faculty, without first swearing "that he will always hold, believe, and teach by word and writing that the Virgin Mother of God, Our Lady, was conceived without original sin in the first moment of her natural being, as she was."

Scholastic education at the University consisted mainly in memorizing answers. That was the only logical course to follow, since all knowledge was revealed and set down in books. "In ordinary circumstances," writes J. T. Lanning in his excellent study of colonial universities *(Academic Culture in the Spanish Colonies)*, "the regimen produced men of stupendous rote memory, along with imposing but inappropriate and artificial allusions to the ancients and to the myths. These had long been the symbols of the 'compleat' intellectual, the proudest result of education and the surest mark of the colonial scholar. Prodigies at thirteen or fourteen held degrees in law, practiced before the royal audiencia, and competed against their professors for their posts."

It was originally intended to restrict the higher learning to persons without "blood taint" (that is, those without

Negro, Jewish, or Moorish blood), but, as Lanning points out, "there was little effective prejudice against the Negro and mulatto before the eighteenth century.... The rule against blood taint had not been enforced, and some persons of color found their way into the professions, especially medicine, which was not held in high repute much before the eighteenth century." Blood taint also included those whose parents or grandparents had been punished by the Inquisition.

The University was a very busy place. In the 268 years of its existence, up to Independence, it ground out 37,732 bachelors, and 1,655 licenciados and doctors. This industry did not necessarily represent a thirst for knowledge. The University offered an opportunity for the ambitious or the talented to join the ranks of the privileged, in the clergy or in the professions. A very considerable number of the students were poor, and the University was continually pestered by petitions for exemption from fees. Some of these indigent students were taken care of by fellowships. The moment a student was admitted to the University he was protected by the ecclesiastical immunities, and could be touched by the civil authorities only in specified cases. From freshman to dean all the steps in the University hierarchy were heavily encased in dignity, which went to the length of allowing the rector to go through the streets preceded by two armed Negro lackeys in livery—a privilege much resented by certain of the viceroys, who were not permitted that distinction.

The teaching and practice of medicine came within the clerical orbit. Authority and mysticism predominated. Medicine was the stepchild of the University. During the Middle Ages Spanish physicians, by their contact with Arabic and Jewish practitioners, had an advantage over their European rivals, but running against this salutary current was a strong prejudice against accepting anything from the infidel. So Spanish medicine fell into the methods of the Schoolmen, and the art of healing was learned by consulting Latin versions of Galen and Hippocrates.

Medicine was held in such poor esteem in the University that students of doubtful ancestry were occasionally allowed to get degrees. Instruction was, of course, in Latin, and the ability to patter diagnoses and prescriptions in that mysterious tongue was an essential part of the witchcraft which passed for medicine. The difficulty and expense of attaining a medical degree, however, brought into being a class of popular physicians, known as *curanderos*, who knew no Latin and had to practice their art in Spanish. There was so much agitation on the part of Latin-speaking medicos against their Spanish-speaking rivals that one gets the impression that the principal efforts of the profession in the public welfare were directed toward keeping the curanderos out of circulation.

Among the nostrums prescribed by the learned, one recognizes the standard remedies of medieval authorities. There was a bewildering assortment of troches, suppositories, electuaries, clysters, ointments, powders, purges, and plasters, whose complicated ingredients included calomel, verdigris, white lead, mercury, gums, turpentine, vinegar, herbs, oils, and other things not so nice by half. It was an expensive business to get sick. One bill of medicines prescribed for the wife of Cortés came to 172 pesos gold. The excessive cost of professional medical service limited the physician's activity to the more prosperous. The rest of society got along with curanderos and Indian herb doctors, or left it to God—which, perhaps, was just as well. One can understand why a person stricken by disease first called a priest.

Medicine remained generally at this paleolithic level during the Silver Age, although toward the end there were some stirrings toward modern methods of investigation. Particularly worthy of note was the Protomedicato, a sort of state medical board, founded in the sixteenth century, which had charge of the examination and certification of physicians. It did a great deal toward controlling quackery and malpractice, although it may be argued that popular quacks could do no more harm than certified ones. The Protomedicato, however, had a good deal of power, and, when the discovery of inoculation and vaccination against smallpox was accepted by the profession, the Protomedicato was of great value in its propagation. The anti-smallpox expedition of Francisco Xavier Balmis in 1803 was the beginning of modern medicine in Spanish America, but it occurred at the very end of the old régime.

Meanwhile, the ignorance of the nature of disease and the unspeakable sanitary conditions of cities and villages brought about a monotonous repetition of epidemics: smallpox, measles, influenza, typhoid, typhus, cholera, and the rest, while malaria, enteritis, syphilis, tuberculosis, yellow fever, and a number of obscure native maladies were endemic. The first century of the Spanish occupation was marked by the disappearance of many millions of Indians, who had no protection against the diseases of Europe and Asia. Some of these epidemics depopulated whole provinces, and large areas were thus made available for settlement. For this reason epidemics may be considered a prime cause of the early spread of cattle-raising and *latifundismo*.

If the theologian and the bachelor at law could look down upon the physician, the latter could heal his ego by looking down upon the apothecary and the curandero, while they could all unite in despising the lowly surgeon. Surgery was practiced by barbers, under license from the Protomedicato, and was confined to bleeding, to opening abscesses, to the dressing of wounds, and the like. But interest in surgery was growing in Europe and was reflected in New Spain by a new school of surgery in Mexico City in 1770, although it was opposed by the Protomedicato on the ground that surgeons could not speak Latin.

I should not like to leave the impression that medicine in

New Spain was more than relatively backward, for up to the defeat of scholasticism in medicine in the eighteenth century the ignorance, superstition, and conservatism of the medical profession in Europe were hardly less notorious.

* * *

The literary and intellectual life of New Spain during the Silver Age was completely dominated by clerical pedantry, centering in the University. The sixteenth century had produced a robust literature inspired by the Conquest. Bernal Díaz del Castillo's Homeric *True History of the Conquest of New Spain* is one of the greatest chronicles of all time, but it was written by a soldier in a soldier's language. His lack of Latin was his abiding sorrow. The elegant literature produced by the learned, on the other hand, imitated only too successfully the wearisome obscurities then considered good taste in Spain. Letters were chiefly concerned with endless elaboration of the commonplace; they were the embroidery and fancywork of an idle class. One great exception was the playwright, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, who went to Spain early in the seventeenth century and, in spite of savage ridicule directed at his deformity (he was a hunchback), wrote plays of such insight and invention that they are still read with pleasure. Another exception was Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

1664. The last viceroy appointed by Spain's playboy king, Philip IV, arrived in Mexico. The Marqués de Mancera was a vigorous and efficient administrator. He was also a good fellow, and soon gathered about him a company of the pleasantest and most hell-roaring young blades of the capital. By great good fortune the Marqués had married a beautiful and talented woman, Doña Leonor Carreto, who formed a court or salon of her own with the most ornamental young women of the aristocracy. Her favorite lady-in-waiting was a delicate girl named Juana Inés de Asbaje, who had been brought to the city at the age of eight, and even then was beginning to attract attention by her precocity. At fifteen she was already writing witty and graceful verses, full of conceits, bookish and infinitely remote from the strong colors of Mexico, but somehow beautiful.

This extraordinary girl became the constant companion of Doña Leonor. Some of her best poems are dedicated to her "Laura," as she called her patroness (all the members of the vicereine's circle had such-like fanciful names for one another). A year or so passed in this intoxicating atmosphere. Juana Inés particularly delighted the viceroy by defeating the learned professors of the University at their own game of quoting authorities. She seemed destined for a great place in the world, and was courted and sought after above all others. And then, with a fine sense of the dramatic, or possibly, as it was whispered, because of disappointment in love, she retired with her books and her learning to the convent of St. Jerome, where she earned the disapproval of her superiors by continuing her studies and writing.

For the next twenty-five years Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz devoted herself to letters. Then one day in 1693, in an access of piety, she gave away her rich library and renounced her writing. Two years later her convent was invaded by one of the epidemics which were the scourge of the capital, and Sor Juana gave herself to nursing her sisters. In a few days she caught the infection and came to a fitting and tragic end on April 17, 1695. She is deservedly considered the first and greatest of Mexico's poets.

The poetry of Sor Juana Inés necessarily reflects much of the artificiality then in vogue. It is like the best of the paper and metal flowers which decorate the graves of Mexico. It has some of the charming frivolity of the Restoration poetry of England, with, of course, none of its libertinism. At the risk of doing Sor Juana an injustice, I have translated below one of her best known sonnets. My rendition misses the curious light music of her lines, but it will serve to give an idea of her erudite playfulness and good sense.

SONNET TO HER PORTRAIT.

The painted counterfeit which you perceive,
With syllogisms false of colors made,
Where niceties of art make brave parade,
And cunning craft the senses doth deceive;

Where lying flattery hath dared conceive
To hide the years by ravages betrayed,
Obliterate the scars where Time hath stayed,
And triumph o'er oblivion—believe

Me, is a frail device yet more forlorn
Than silly flowers tossed upon the wind,
Against a certain Fate a broken door;

A foolish enterprise, of Folly born,
A sorry, senile thing, which, to my mind,
Is dust, a corpse, a shadow, nothing more.

The one man who stands out above the rest in the learned circles of the time is Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, a contemporary of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Educated by the Jesuits, Sigüenza showed an astonishing proficiency in mathematics and the physical sciences. At the age of twenty-seven he won the chair of mathematics and astrology at the University. His interests were broad and his activity was prodigious. Physics, astronomy, cosmography, history, archeology, and native languages absorbed most of his energy, while the rest of it was unhappily devoted to poetry. In the physical world Sigüenza was an apostle of common sense. His argument for the natural origin of comets (as opposed to the official belief that they were divine portents of disaster) led him into a bitter controversy with the Jesuit scholar and missionary, Father Eusebio

Kino, and won him respectful consideration abroad. At the University he advocated the adoption of the Cartesian method and the abandonment of the slavish acceptance of classical authorities. He was a witness of the dangerous riot of 1692, and was the author of the plan to redistribute the population of the city. Although he was a student of the ancient culture of Mexico, he failed to see any connection between it and the Indian life about him, reflecting in this the upper-class prejudices of the time. Indians were inferior beings, to be controlled by force and kept in perpetual tutelage.

Sigüenza wrote endlessly in all his many fields. Although in science he was the apostle of common sense, in his prose he was the Sandman himself, while his verse (of which he was extremely proud) is the highest point which the cult of obscurity ever attained. Since the more involved and incomprehensible a poem was, the greater its merit, it is significant that Sigüenza carried off prizes in the poetic contests of the capital.

Sigüenza is usually credited with having been the first modern scientist of Mexico. It may be that in him we have a hint of the revolt against the suffocating scholasticism of the University—a revolt which in the next century led to an awakening interest in the world of thought. Toward the end of the old régime timid theses in bad Latin began to appear, discussing the revolutionary ideas which were to destroy the University and all it stood for, but it would be hazardous to assume that these feeble stirrings of the mind went much beyond the closed circle of the elect. The great mass of colonial society, white, Indian, and mestizo, remained untouched by foreign heresies, under the sheltering wing of Mother Church and the Inquisition.

Chapter XVII

THE HOLY OFFICE

No institution of the Spanish Empire has been more publicized than the Inquisition, and no institution has brought more opprobrium on the Spanish Church. Invented in the thirteenth century at the inspiration of St. Dominic, it was used by Innocent III to crush the Albigensian heretics of Languedoc, but it achieved little popularity in that civilized age. It was regarded with particular hostility in Spain, where it was looked upon, with reason, as another attempt of the papacy to dominate the peninsula—a struggle which had been going on since the eleventh century. It was not until Isabella the Catholic was confronted with the task of unifying Castile that its usefulness was recognized there, but it was established as a *Spanish* corporation, over the strong opposition, incidentally, of the pope.

The Inquisition was a politico-religious engine. Jews, Moslems, and Christians of doubtful orthodoxy existed in Spain in such numbers that they constituted a real menace to the new Christian state that Isabella was creating. Moreover, their connections with Mohammedan states across the Strait made them a dangerous fifth column in case the Moslems should attempt the reconquest of Granada—a project which was cherished for many years in Berbery. The Inquisition was set up to clean house of these dissident elements. It was backed by the new might of Castile, and its program of protecting the chosen people from corruption by the infidel gained it an unwilling acceptance among the liberty-loving Spaniards. The Inquisition was an extremely effective engine; it did its work so thoroughly that within a few generations Spain had been forced into the Procrustean bed of orthodoxy. The Holy Office was not brought to New Spain until 1571, when the empire was threatened with corruption from the influx of Portuguese Jews–Portugal having been annexed to Spain in 1560.

It is difficult to discuss the Holy Office objectively. One must bear in mind that the Spanish Inquisition was established in the fifteenth century as an instrument of furthering the new absolutism that was remaking Spain. Its aims are understandable, but its methods have long since been rejected by civilized peoples. It was the Gestapo of the new state, and its methods were terror and secrecy, although it must be said in its defense that it was governed by a strict code, however mistaken in its principles; that it aimed to protect the falsely accused; and that its judges were usually men of the highest integrity.

A great deal of romantic nonsense has been written about the tortures of the Inquisition. It should be remembered that it was a semi-civil tribunal, and that, following the universal practice of the day, it used judicial torture to establish the guilt of the guilty and the innocence of the innocent. The Inquisition did not inflict torture as a punishment. Kind and degree of torture were carefully prescribed, so as to avoid maiming or death. The witness to be examined was warned that in case of obduracy he alone was responsible for any injury he might receive. Torture varied in method from one Holy Office to another, but the forms most commonly used in New Spain were water and the cord.

The cord was a cheap and effective device, which consisted in tying knotted ropes around one's arms and legs, and then twisting them with a stick until the knots bit into the flesh. Five turns of the stick were usually the limit. If the witness proved obdurate his pain was further increased by soaking the ropes with water, which caused them to shrink. Sometimes the cord was used around the head, but this practice was not recommended, because the witness's eyes were likely to pop out. Care was also recommended in the use of the cord on women, as their fragile bones broke more easily than men's.

The cord, or the threat of it, was usually enough to loosen the tongue of a witness, but in cases of extreme stubbornness he was secured to the rack and a funnel was thrust down his throat. Then a prescribed number of pitchers of cold water were poured down his gullet. The water torture was so effective that few were able to support it. Those who endured to the end of the course were declared to have "vanquished the torment" and were pronounced innocent. Judicial torture was a curious survival of the primitive trial by ordeal.

In case the accused or the witness incriminated himself, as he usually did, he was sentenced to a punishment supposed to fit the crime, ranging from fine and imprisonment to burning at the stake. Since the Church was not allowed to inflict corporal punishment, the execution of the sentence was put into the hands of the civil authorities, the so-called "secular arm." The sentence was made public in that fearful ceremony known as the *auto de fe* (act of faith), which was enhanced by all the terrifying theatricals the Holy Office could devise, and which aimed to impress upon observers that its awful eye was upon them. The most inhuman part of the sentences imposed by the Inquisition was the inclusion in the convict's guilt of the second and third generations of his descendants, who were barred from all honorable posts in the service of the state or Church, and were, in fact, made into social outcasts.

Although judicial torture in the Holy Office was the feature of it which has excited the most morbid imaginings, the most effective device for making its power felt was a complete and terrifying secrecy. Nothing which took place within its walls could be known outside. The first intimation a man had that he was being investigated was the appearance of the black-uniformed familiars of the Holy Office at his door, usually at night. From that moment until his release or until his condemnation in the auto de fe it was as if he had vanished from the earth. The effect of his arrest on the minds of his family and friends can readily be imagined. Terror seized them, and they were avoided like the plague, for who knew what the accused might say in his agony? The accused himself could never learn the nature of the charges against him; he was never confronted by his accusers; his only part in the examination was to answer a series of questions so ambiguously worded that it was a clever man who did not incriminate himself. If his preliminary examination proved unsatisfactory, or the evidence against him was strong enough, he was put to the torture to clarify his case, or to expose his accomplices. The procedure might take months, or even years. There are cases which were never completed, presumably because the accused died under torture, or otherwise.

The most famous case tried by the Inquisition of Mexico was that of the luckless Carvajal family. Don Luis de Carvajal was a New Christian from Portugal. He was also the most enlightened and humane of the conquistadores. His conquest of Nuevo León was the most successful ever undertaken in New Spain, and in a few years he had transformed that remote corner of the kingdom into an orderly and prosperous community. Carvajal's piety was unquestionable, but, unfortunately for him, Philip II had given him permission to bring a hundred families from Portugal, and most of them turned out to be unrepentant Jews. Carvajal was denounced to the Holy Office in 1589, and the following year he was condemned to six years' exile for having failed to report the presence of Jews in Nuevo León. The net was spread, and within a short time it had caught a hundred and twenty victims, including the whole

Carvajal family. The most harrowing part of the affair was the torture and trial of the niece and nephew of the governor, who, with a number of his relatives, were strangled and burned in the public burning place *(quemadero)* of Mexico City.

Even so the Holy Office of Mexico was a poor thing as compared with the frightful engine of Isabella. Few heretics and Jews found their way to the New World, and *the Indians were exempted from its ministrations.* Its principal function was the censorship of books and the exclusion of all literature suspected of heretical leanings. No book could be printed without the *imprimatur* of the Inquisition. Colonial literature might not have developed very far in any case, but the censorship of the Holy Office condemned it to complete stagnation.

Back in Spain the Inquisition was slowly dying of inanition in the face of modern rationalism, and it went into rapid decline under the anti-clerical Bourbon monarchs of the eighteenth century, until, in the words of Thomas Buckle, "It was reduced to such pitiful straits, that between 1746 and 1759 it was only able to burn ten persons; and between 1759 and 1788, only four persons." In fact, the last burning recorded in Spain was that of a witch, in 1781. Judicial torture was falling into disuse at the same time throughout Europe.

In New Spain the modern spirit was even more manifest. The Inquisition was openly defied by Viceroy the Marqués de Croix, himself an emancipated son of the Age of Reason. Summoned before the tribunal to explain certain insults which he was accused of having offered to dignitaries of the Church (and very likely did), he appeared, but took the precaution of posting several pieces of artillery in the square outside. The judges took the hint, and Croix was dismissed with apologies.

By the end of the old régime the terrible tribunal of the

Holy Office was spending all its time doddering over books and excising suspected passages—to no purpose, it may be added, for British and American smugglers were doing a fine business selling forbidden literature to the famished intellectuals of New Spain.

Chapter XVIII

THE BENEVOLENT DESPOTS

The Silver Age was an era of consolidation. The fire of conquest had long since burned out, and the Spanish government had to undertake the less spectacular but no less difficult task of making its conquests stick, in the face of hungry and aggressive rivals. The frontiers were gradually straightened. In the wild north country, from Texas to the Pacific, missions and garrisons were strung out. The Jesuits in Sinaloa, Sonora, and Lower California, and the Franciscans in Texas and New Mexico, braved death (and often faced it) to spread the Word of God among the heathen, while soldiers stood by to suppress uprisings, and the settlers got a firmer hold on the Indians' land.

The rich trade with the Orient obliged the government to undertake its protection against pirates and scurvy. The seizure of the Manila galleon off Lower California by John Cavendish in 1587 led to the exploration of the west coast by Sebastián Vizcaíno in 1602. Looking for a convenient port for the revictualing and protection of the galleons, Vizcaíno sailed north beyond Cape Mendocino in California. He missed San Francisco Bay, as they all did, but discovered the port which he named Monterey, in honor of the viceroy. Upper California, however, was many months away; the voyage up the coast in the teeth of the northwest gale was a desperately slow business of endless tacking. So a hundred and sixty-odd years were to elapse before the expansion of Russia induced the Spanish government to establish from San Diego to San Francisco the typical line of missions and presidios—"the outposts of empire," as Professor Bolton has aptly named them.

New Spain had been organized in the sixteenth century into administrative districts known as *corregimientos* and *alcaldías mayores*, under the corresponding officers. These magistrates were courts as well as executives, and their power for good or evil (particularly for evil) was very great. The execrable system of selling offices had its most vicious effect among them. Suppose, for instance, that an alcalde mayor had to pay five hundred pesos a year for his job, as Father Morfi reports. The sale naturally carried with it the assumption that he would not be interfered with when he reimbursed himself. He was allowed to shake down the people of his district in various ways. A favorite device of the corregidor or alcalde mayor (there was no difference between the two offices, as far as I can determine) was to impose a sort of *gabelle*. He would stock up with seeds, tools, salt, textiles, and other commodities, and apportion a minimum yearly purchase of them among the towns of his district. Since he could drive competitors out of business (he was the Law), he could put prices up as high as the traffic would bear.

The local governments of New Spain came to be regarded as private monopolies with vested interests. Bureaucrats degenerated into regional bosses known as *caciques*, who tended to interpret the Laws of the Indies to their own and to their friends' advantage (as in the case of the corregidor of Metepec cited above). As they became rich and formed connections with the landed gentry, it became increasingly harder to control their rapacity. Even the powerful Bourbon viceroys of the eighteenth century were unable to break their hold, and *caciquismo* (personal and irresponsible government) came to be the pattern of provincial administration. This great evil was one of the principal obstacles in the way of setting up a working government under the Republic and is today one of the gravest political problems of Mexico.

All things considered, it is remarkable that the viceroys of New Spain during the century of the last three Hapsburgs were no worse. Although they had bought their jobs and certainly did not measure up to the standard set by the excellent civil servants of Philip II, yet most of them were far from being the conscienceless grafters one reads about. In any case, such was the prostration of the Spanish crown that they would have been helpless to cope with the intricate hierarchy of linked privilege which bound together the magistracy, the clergy, and the landed and mining interests of New Spain. Those who attempted it, like the Marqués de Gelves and Bishop Palafox, were broken by the combination. *New Spain was virtually independent at the end of the seventeenth century.*

The Spanish Hapsburgs luckily died out with the imbecile Charles II, "the bewitched," who had been the helpless tool of intriguing foreign agents, clerics, and his own mother. The Bourbons brought a different sort of despotism to Spain in 1701. For some centuries they had been emancipated from clerical control; they meant to rule in fact, not by the sufferance of the clergy. They were "benevolent despots," model Louis XIV.

The Augean stable of Spanish government and economy left by Charles II would have dismayed Hercules himself, but the Bourbons, although "they never learned anything and never forgot anything," did have the virtue of pertinacity. Slowly, with the help of such able foreign ministers as Orry, Alberoni, and Grimaldi, Philip V and his successors dug Spain out of the muck and began the long job of remodeling her after the French system of Richelieu and Colbert. Those two statesmen had successfully broken feudal and local independence in France by redividing the country into large administrative districts under powerful officers (intendants) responsible only to the crown. The intendant system was introduced into Spain by Philip V in 1718.

A vast program of reform was undertaken at the same time. The collection of state revenues was taken out of the hands of tax-farmers; handouts to the clergy were cut down, and clerical meddling in the government was eliminated; the sale of public offices was curtailed; commerce and manufacturing were relieved of some of the suffocating taxes and restrictions imposed by the Hapsburgs; foreign competition was reduced by high tariffs and outright prohibitions; the army and navy were reorganized along modern lines and given self-respect; the new royal academies of language and history, the new University of Barcelona, and technical and medical schools at Madrid and Seville began to gnaw at the foundations of scholasticism. It was revolution from above in the best totalitarian tradition, and very few Spaniards liked it. Ancient prejudice against foreigners, pride, custom, and privilege died hard. Those honest men who saw in the revolution the birth of a new Spain were dubbed *afrancesados* and were more bitterly hated than the foreigners themselves.

The first half century of Bourbon rule had no great effect in New Spain. The new viceroys administered the old system somewhat better than their predecessors, but it was not until Spain had become strong again that the revolution was brought to America. Charles III (1759-1788) needed money. To increase the revenues of the crown he had to reform the administration of the Indies. Overseas commerce had been a monopoly of the single port of Cadiz, and the trade was virtually all in foreign hands. Cadiz was a very narrow bottleneck, and the resultant scarcity and high prices of manufactured articles made the colonists trade openly with British smugglers. *By the eighteenth century well over half of all the commerce of Spanish America was handled by smugglers.* The monopoly of Cadiz was broken little by little by opening more Spanish ports to

American commerce, until in 1778 all trade within the empire was made free. Free trade and protection brought Spanish industry and shipping to life; traffic between Spain and America doubled and tripled, and the crown revenues soared to five or six times their level in 1700.

The reform of New Spain was put into the hands of one of the most remarkable men ever sent to the Indies, José de Gálvez, visitor general from 1765 to 1772. Gálvez was expected to carry through in New Spain the revolution that had been only partly accomplished in the old country in half a century. His formidable commission was aided by his having as partner a viceroy who shared his views and responsibilities, the Marqués de Croix. At the outset the two were given their most delicate assignment, the expulsion of the Jesuits.

The motives of the expulsion have been debated ever since, and one guess is as good as another. Mine is that Charles III, in his battle with the clergy, chose the most vulnerable point to attack. The Jesuits had grown too powerful for their own good. From their humble beginning as the spiritual militia of the Church, they had become in time a sort of praetorian guard of the throne of St. Peter. Their institutions in the Spanish Empire were jealously guarded autonomies, which popular imagination had endowed with great wealth. In the totalitarian state of Charles III the Society of Jesus was an anomaly. The order was expelled from Spain in March, 1767, and was suppressed by the pope that same year.

In New Spain the expulsion of the Jesuits was planned and executed with the utmost secrecy. The Jesuits, by their domination of the schools, by the reverence with which they were regarded by Indians and Creoles, by their admirable system of missions in the northwest, were the most influential body in New Spain. But, however peaceful and law-abiding they might be, their friends were bound to raise a storm of protest, which could (and did) develop into armed rebellion. Fully aware of the danger, Gálvez and Croix sent military parties with sealed orders to every Jesuit establishment in the kingdom. In the small hours of the morning of June 2, 1767, officers entered the convents and arrested the 678 members of the order and sent them under guard to Vera Cruz.

The public was thunderstruck. In certain communities, always on the verge of trouble anyway, the expulsion supplied the excuse for such an outburst of rioting and stone-throwing as had not been seen since the famous tumultos of the century before. In San Luis de la Paz, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosí the jails were stormed, public officials were insulted, and the old cry of "Death to the gachupines!" was heard again. In Vallodolid and Pátzcuaro mobs got out of hand and terrorized the town authorities.

But things were very different from the mild days of the late Hapsburgs. Gálvez took charge of the situation in person. With a small army of 600 men he descended upon the disaffected areas, set up a criminal court, and dealt out summary justice in a way that would have shocked Philip II. Eighty-five men were hanged, 73 were lashed into bloody ribbons, 674 were condemned to prison, and 117 were banished. All the convicts were Indians and mestizos. It may not be a coincidence that the jacquerie of Miguel Hidalgo broke out in this same region forty-three years later.

Whatever reasons of state Charles III may have had for expelling the Jesuits, for New Spain the expulsion was a heavy loss. Their missions among the virile tribes of Sonora had kept that troublesome region quiet for a century and a half. The resentment of the Indians was such that military expeditions soon had to take over the "pacification" of Sonora, and some of the tribes were never completely reconciled. Another loss was the closing of the Jesuit schools, which were by long odds the best in the country. Without the Jesuits to hold up the shaky standards of colonial education, sottish ignorance and superstition became too frequently typical of the clergy and the public generally, and afforded an excellent culture for breeding the germs of unrest that were blowing in from Europe. A great material loss came from the seizure of the Jesuit plantations, which were models of efficiency and formed an appreciable part of the agricultural resources of New Spain. The wealth of the Jesuits lay, in fact, not in the hoards of silver and gold which they were supposed to have hidden, but in their ability to make things grow.

The riots of 1767, Gálvez believed, were chargeable to the weak and corrupt government of the alcaldes mayores, and he determined to replace them by intendants as soon as possible. But the intendancies were not established in New Spain until 1786, while Gálvez was minister of the Indies, a year before his death.

The weak external defenses of New Spain and all Spanish America were a source of uneasiness to the crown. Bound up with France by the Bourbon "family compact," Spain was dragged into the interminable wars between France and England for world domination—wars which made the eighteenth century literally "the century of conflict." Gálvez speeded up the organization of a large body of militia, composed of Indian and mestizo conscripts under Spanish and Creole officers. It was the forcible recruiting of the militia which caused the outbreaks of 1767 as much as resentment over the expulsion of the Jesuits. In 1769 Gálvez undertook the settlement and protection of the exposed northwestern section of the kingdom. While on this expedition he got word of the threatened Russian occupation of Upper California. To meet this new menace the tireless Gálvez organized and sent off the famous religious and military expeditions of Fray Junípero Serra and Captain Gaspar de Portolá, which brought the limits of New Spain to San Francisco Bay.

It would require a treatise like H. I. Priestley's scholarly

José de Gálvez to give an adequate notion of the scope of the Bourbon revolution in New Spain. It touched every phase of colonial life. In spite of themselves, the people of New Spain profited by the irritating efficiency of the new régime. It again became safe to travel over the roads. The new trade program cut out a good deal of illegitimate gain, but goods were cheaper and more plentiful for the rest of the population. The increased revenues of the crown did not come from increased taxation, but from prosperity. New Spain not only defended herself; she expended large sums for the fortification of Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Ocean travel (in the short intervals between wars) was safer than ever before. The government went into business, to the great distress of private monopolists, and the tobacco *estanco* established by Gálvez produced a net revenue of three to four million pesos a year for forty-five years. The manufacture of gunpowder (used mostly in mining) brought in another three million a year, and minor projects prospered in proportion. Outside of the government monopolies private enterprise was encouraged and flourished as never before.

The new prosperity made the eighteenth century the period of building. Cities competed with one another in erecting public buildings in the severe neo-classic style. Great aqueducts brought water to them and to the haciendas. Interest in the natural sciences was awakened, and scientific expeditions explored the resources of the kingdom. After a hundred years of the Bourbon revolution New Spain was on her way to taking her place among modern nations. She was certainly the most solvent nation in the world. She not only paid all her own expenses and had no debt but remitted twenty million pesos a year to the Spanish crown. Baron von Humboldt, although he did not blink the shortcomings of the colonial régime, was, nevertheless, so enthusiastic that his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* reads like a panegyric.

The prosperity of the country, to be sure, was confined more or less to the upper crust. The agricultural worker on the hacienda continued in his status of virtual serfdom at one real a day, although he was not, as Humboldt remarked, any worse off than his contemporary in Europe. The textile industry was nothing but a lot of sweatshops—but so were the factories of England. The point I wish to make is that we must not expect the people of one age to anticipate the ideas of a later one. An exception that I have mentioned was mining, where the skilled worker was relatively well paid.

New Spain and Old Spain both, however, were being driven beyond their natural gait. The Bourbon threat to established privilege and custom aroused a sullen resentment. And then it was an intolerable affront to one's dignity to have to play second fiddle to gachupín meddlers and busybodies and to see the best jobs go to middle-class nonentities from Spain. As the visitor Carrillo had pointed out in 1626, the feud between Creoles and Spaniards was deeply rooted. It spread among all professions. It split churches, colleges, religious orders, and government bureaus into Montagues and Capulets. It was a highly dangerous and irrational phenomenon, and the Bourbon régime exacerbated the matter beyond endurance. Let the government weaken again and the country would blow up like an overheated boiler.

When the great Charles III died in 1788 and left the complicated mechanism of the Bourbon state to his fatuous son, Charles IV, stresses began to appear in all directions. The disgusting spectacle of seeing the proud empire ruled by the lecherous queen, María Luisa of Parma, and her guardsman lover, Manuel Godoy, did much to destroy the wholesome respect for the crown which had silenced open criticism for nearly a century.

The effects of the change were not immediately visible in New Spain. On the contrary, the last viceroy appointed by Charles III, the second Conde de Revillagigedo, ranks with Luis de Velasco as one of the two greatest. Revillagigedo was the ideal servant of a benevolent despot. His wisdom, vigor, and integrity were matched by his loyalty and his ambition for his monarch. His curiosity covered every branch of government. He innovated little, but strove to make effective the reforms of Gálvez. It was he who finally established the much-needed intendant system. Under him the government revenues reached the highest point in history. He personally supervised the public service and purged justice of some of its corruption. Mexico City was cleaned up and beautified. No country was ever more fortunate in its ruler than New Spain under Revillagigedo. His stature is best seen in the analysis of colonial government which he wrote for the benefit of his successor upon leaving office in 1795, his *Instrucción Reservada* (Confidential Advice)—advice which, unfortunately, no successor had the ability to follow.

Revillagigedo's reign was the triumph and final flowering of benevolent despotism. He was followed by a creature of Godoy, the Marqués de Branciforte. Branciforte reflected only too faithfully the character of his patron, being a vain, ostentatious, and dishonest mediocrity. At his touch the new civic spirit began to wilt. Justice and favors were again put up for sale, and ancient privilege could breathe freely once more.

In Europe the French Revolution had released the storm which was to destroy the very framework of a world that could produce a New Spain. The frivolous Godoy led Spain along the disastrous course which was to end in total extinction. His first folly was to enter the alliance against France in 1793 to avenge the execution of Louis XVI. The result was a series of crushing defeats administered by the Republican armies, and the dishonorable treaty with Napoleon of 1795, which brought Godoy the ridiculous title of "Prince of the Peace" conferred by his cuckold master.

Godoy became a tool of Napoleon in the absorption of Spain. He led his country into the Continental System and lost the fine navy of Charles III to Nelson at Trafalgar. The cup of folly was already full, but it spilled over in 1808, when Godoy did nothing to prevent Napoleon's contemptuous seizure of Charles IV and Crown Prince Ferdinand at Bayonne, and all Spain flamed up in a wild rebellion.

The "principle of authority" was no more. New Spain followed the mother country into the abyss of anarchy. Passions and resentments that had lain so long just under the surface could now be released without the fear of a royal visitor, and New Spain was to indulge in an orgy of blood-letting that was not to cease until exhaustion, or until some new tyrant should impose order at the point of a gun.

Chapter XIX

THE GREAT MUTINY

The movement which I have called the Great Mutiny was as complicated as Chaos. It was really a long series of mutinies, which, in a sense, are still going on–from Mutiny to Revolution, we might call it. It did not begin among those who had every right to mutiny. At first it was not even an armed movement.

The news of the imprisonment of Charles IV, his abdication in favor of Ferdinand VII, and the elevation of Joseph Bonaparte to the throne of Spain, all came at the same time. The confusion in New Spain will be easily imagined, particularly since the confusion was the excuse for each faction to claim some sort of right to take a hand in the government. The City Council *(cabildo)* of Mexico was composed mainly of rich Creoles. Said they: "We shall not recognize the puppet of Napoleon. The king (whom God preserve!) is in the enemy's hands. The Audiencia and the viceroy have not, therefore, any source of authority, since their authority comes from the king. Let us follow the example of the cities of Spain and set up a provisional junta of municipalities to hold the country until the king is restored." Said the Audiencia: "Nonsense! We were constituted the highest power in the land by our sovereign (whom God preserve!), and he still rules through us. We shall, therefore, continue to rule until his restoration." José de Iturrigaray, the viceroy, being a creature of Godoy, said nothing.

The Audiencia and the Spanish elements of the capital suspected rightly that the Creoles' enthusiasm for municipal rule was a thinly disguised move toward independence, in spite of their vociferous loyalty to Ferdinand VII. (Since 1776 independence had been a word to conjure with in the western hemisphere.) The question of who was to rule was argued with great erudition on both sides. The merits of the case, of course, had nothing to do with the matter. The talking was merely a lawyers' game. The real game was the struggle for power between Creoles and gachupines —as usual.

The equivocal attitude of the viceroy made it impossible to settle the question. He was convinced that Spain could not stand against Napoleon, that New Spain would become independent, and that he stood a very good chance of making himself head of it. So he secretly encouraged the Creoles, who became more insistent in their demand for a provisional government. Finally the viceroy called a junta in August, 1808. The Creoles controlled it by their superior numbers, and Iturrigaray began to put on airs of royalty. The alarm of the Spaniards grew. When at last it became evident that the viceroy had sold out to the Creoles and that the latter were bent on independence, the Spaniards decided to take things in their own hands.

Don Gabriel Yermo was a wealthy Spanish sugar grower. His hacienda in what is now the state of Morelos was a model of thrift and good management. His humanity and good sense had led him to set free all the Negro slaves of his plantation, several hundreds of them, and they showed their loyalty and gratitude by serving him even as militia in the stormy days to come. Yermo was, in short, a benevolent despot in miniature and the highest type of industrious and intelligent Spaniard. So when the Spaniards of the capital looked about for a figure who would attract the best people to their cause they chose Don Gabriel. By appealing to his patriotism and by proving to him the treason of Iturrigaray, they persuaded him to lead the conspiracy which was to have such far-reaching and fatal consequences.

On the night of September 15, 1808, a small group of armed men, very probably with the knowledge of the Audiencia, entered the palace, shot the only sentry who had not been suborned, and arrested Iturrigaray. Then they proclaimed old General Garibay viceroy in his place, and their act was recognized (illegally) by the Audiencia. Just as Napoleon had knocked the keystone out of the arch of Spanish authoritarianism, Yermo and his fellow conspirators destroyed the principle of legality in New Spain. Their provocation was great, and their fear for their own interests probably greater. Yermo seems to have been a man of integrity and to have been convinced that only by force could New Spain be prevented from secession. However it was, thenceforth the *coup d'état* was to be the thing, and legality a mere cloak to cover rule by force. It is interesting to note in passing that the first overt act in the destruction of law was committed by the Spaniards, although that fact is very likely an accident without significance.

The Creoles were apt pupils in power politics and soon bettered their instruction. Outplayed by the gachupines for the control of the government, they organized "literary" clubs and secret societies on the French plan, particularly one called the Caballeros Racionales, which is to say "Gentlemen of Reason"—reason here to be understood in its connotation of the French Revolution. Napoleon's agents were busy spreading the gospel of the Jacobins in New Spain, and the Gentlemen of Reason began to see themselves as the founders of a Republic. It was all very flattering to starved egos, and was as infectious as the cholera.

The puppet viceroy, Garibay, was a doddering old man incapable of decision. The Audiencia got word back to the Junta Central of Seville (generally recognized as the provisional government of insurgent Spain), and the Junta appointed Archbishop Lizana to supersede him. But Lizana also turned out to be a mediocrity, and was, moreover, under the influence of the Creoles. The chronic weakness of the government encouraged more and more people to join the underground movement for independence, until the country was honeycombed with secret societies. One of the most active of these cells was the "Literary and Social Club of Querétaro," whose active head was a Creole officer in command of the local militia, Captain Ignacio Allende. The club grew and prospered, and in time came to include influential citizens from Querétaro to Guanajuato. Perhaps its most enthusiastic member was the parish priest of the little town of Dolores. His name was Father Miguel Hidalgo.

Miguel Hidalgo is a very delicate subject to discuss. Mexican patriotism has made him the Father of Independence and a symbol of the revolt against all the evils of the old régime up to the present Revolution. He has become the Scourge of Tyrants, the Friend of the Oppressed, the Man of Mexico.

All movements must have symbols. In the United States we have distorted some of our country's great men until their own mothers would not know them; we have made Washington a prig and Lincoln a god. In Mexico the figure of Hidalgo has lately been deified in school texts and mural paintings until it is quite unrecognizable in the light of the documents of his day. The best thing we can do is to recognize two Hidalgos, the symbolic figure and the man. Of the two the man is infinitely the more interesting.

Hidalgo was not a great man. He had lived for fifty-seven years without achieving distinction in anything. He loved words and had the power to move people. He most certainly thought he was a man of talent who had been relegated to an unimportant parish because he was a Creole. As he saw the better posts in the Church go to men who had no greater recommendation than to have been born in Spain, his sense of injury grew to a consuming hatred of all things Spanish. All his personal wrongs, and all the injustices and miseries of the country he laid to the diabolism of the gachupines. As his phobia grew he practiced a number of innocent compensations. He read forbidden books; he raised forbidden grapes and pressed forbidden wine; he planted forbidden mulberry trees and spun forbidden silk. He also busied himself by running a small pottery in Dolores. His discontent might have led to nothing, and he might have ended his days in harmless obscurity if the Literary and Social Club of Querétaro had not given a scope for his forbidden learning and eloquence. He acquired a taste for conspiracy. The Rights of Man, the Social Contract, and the rest of the explosive doctrines of the French Revolution were woven in his mind into a beautiful fabric of the perfect Republic, from which gachupines should be excluded.

But even Hidalgo could not forego a "principle of authority," as the cant of the time had it, and the head of his ideal state was to be none other than the unspeakable son of Charles IV, although, to be sure, Hidalgo did not know he was unspeakable. It is strange to see the sullen figure of Ferdinand VII held up in the documents of the time as the hope of an oppressed people. (The Creoles thought they were oppressed, at least.) It would be pathetic if it had not been arrant hypocrisy. Hidalgo may have been simpleminded enough to think that independence from the gachupines could be achieved by calling in a gachupín ruler. In any case, he could not conceive of a state without a semidivine sovereign.

The conspirators got beyond the talking stage. The Literary and Social Club of Querétaro hatched out a plot, a very simple plot, far too simple. At the fair of San Juan de los Lagos, on December 8, 1810, an armed band under Captain Allende was to "pronounce" for independence in the name of Ferdinand VII. The populace would join up, and the rest of the country would be invited to go along.

To put the movement on a firm financial footing *the property of all Spaniards was to be seized and incorporated into the national treasury.*

The meetings of the Literary and Social Club were not very secret, and the plot was soon public property. It was denounced to the authorities of Querétaro and Guanajuato, and to the Audiencia itself. But such was the confusion of the government that a fatal lethargy paralyzed action. On September 13 a few arrests were made at Querétaro, and the arms of the conspirators were seized. The whole plot might have died there, in fact, if Allende had not ridden the fifty miles to Dolores to bring the news to Hidalgo. Hidalgo had to decide, and he decided for war. With no military preparation, with apparently little concept of the terrible responsibility he was incurring, drunk with the idea of an independent and gachupín-less state under his leadership, Father Hidalgo gathered up a score of Indians from his pottery and raised the famous *Grito de Dolores:* "Long live Our Lady of Guadalupe! Long live Independence!" But his more realistic followers answered with the old cry of the tumultos, "Death to the gachupines!" Death!

This was a real tumulto, with a real priest at the head of it, and there was no authority to put it down. The original handful was soon swelled by a multitude of shouting Indians from the haciendas. They knew nothing about the Rights of Man, the Social Contract, or Ferdinand VII, but they did understand *death to the gachupines.* Death and booty and a glorious fiesta of blood. They roared through the countryside, gathering more and more followers, until at the end of a week Hidalgo and Allende found themselves embarrassed by a mob of 50,000 shouting Indians.

Ignacio Allende had cherished the notion of being the military leader of the insurrection, but he reckoned without the Indians. This was a religious fiesta, and no leader would do but a priest. Allende was swept out of the way at San Miguel el Grande (now, by a piece of irony, called

San Miguel de Allende), and Hidalgo was named *generalísimo*, although he was totally ignorant of the elements of military science. His vanity is nowhere more apparent than in his acceptance of the military leadership of the insurrection. The series of murderous disasters into which he led his mobs of half-armed and untrained men had no other source. His love of titles became proverbial. He called himself "Captain General of America" and had himself addressed as "Serene Highness," while his staff was crowded with generals and field marshals, created without reference to ability or experience.

From San Miguel el Grande the "Army of Independence" moved to Celaya. People fled before it as before a forest fire. Celaya was taken without resistance. Enthusiasm mounted. They would take Guanajuato; they would take Guadalajara; they would take the capital itself. The army was irresistible. Hidalgo decided to march on Guadalajara, a rich mining city then almost as large as Mexico City.

The intendant of the province, Don Juan Antonio Riaño, was one of the best of the officers put in by the Bourbon reform. Among the many civic improvements he had made in Guanajuato was to erect a large granary, the Alhóndiga de Granaditas, to prevent a recurrence of the terrible famine of the "year of the hunger" of 1783-84. The Alhóndiga is a heavy square structure in the heart of the city. Its great solidity induced Riaño mistakenly to choose it as a stronghold when he heard that Hidalgo's army was approaching. All the treasure of the city and the province was stored there, and the walls were manned by a battalion of militia.

Hidalgo's forces reached Guanajuato on September 28 and took up positions on the hills, from which they could command the Alhóndiga. Unfortunately for the defenders, Riaño was killed at the outset, and a squabble over his successor demoralized the garrison. In any case the defenses could not have stood against the huge crowd of men, now at the height of their frenzy. What followed was one of the most shocking massacres in the history of Mexico. In Guanajuato at the time was a lad of eighteen, named Lucas Alamán, who was later to play such a prominent part in his country's destiny. The massacre at the Alhóndiga made an indelible impression on him and probably warped his mind into the conservative mold which has been so often lamented. Forty years later Alamán described it in his *Historia de México.*

"When the insurgents had taken the Alhóndiga they gave rein to their vengeance. In vain those who had surrendered begged on their knees for mercy.... Most of the soldiers of the battalion were killed; others escaped by taking off their uniforms and mixing with the crowd. Among the officers many young men of the most distinguished families of the city perished, and others were gravely wounded.... Many of the richest and most prominent Spanish citizens were killed.... Some tried to hide in bin number 21 with the dead bodies of the intendant and others, but they were discovered and mercilessly slaughtered. All were stripped of their clothing.... Those who were left alive were tied together and brought naked to the public jail, which was empty, because the prisoners had been turned loose....

"The populace gave itself up to pillaging everything that had been stored in the Alhóndiga, and it was all scattered in a few minutes.... The building presented the most horrible spectacle. The food which had been stored there was strewn about everywhere; naked bodies lay half buried in maize, or in money, and everything was spotted with blood....

"The people who had remained on the hilltops to await the outcome of the action, came down to share in the looting.... That afternoon and night and the following night they sacked all the stores and houses in the city which belonged to Europeans.... On that fatal night the scene was lighted by great numbers of torches, while one heard nothing but the noise of blows crashing against the doors and the ferocious howls of the rabble applauding their fall and rushing in triumph to remove merchandise, furniture, and everything else. . . ."[1]

It was a good tumulto. A satisfactory amount of blood had been spilled, and Hidalgo's war chest was enriched by three million pesos in cash. The startling success of the movement emboldened the conspirators of other groups. Putsches took place in cities and provincial capitals, and in a very short time all New Spain except a few of the larger cities was in the hands of jubilant patriots. Their success was deceitfully easy. They had no organization worthy of the name. The numerous groups were jealous of each other. Then, little by little the stories of horror and pillage revealed to the Creoles the true nature of Hidalgo's uprising. It was a servile revolt, and in a war of the classes they had to stand with the Spaniards. Their private feud could wait until later. Defenses were organized. Two bodies of militia were collected, one under General Torcuato Trujillo, the other under General Felix María Calleja, a total of perhaps 13,000 men.

Hidalgo's forces had overrun the west in a single month, and were now approaching Mexico City. The only defense of the capital was the small army of Trujillo of about 7,000, which intercepted the insurgents at Las Cruces, between Toluca and Mexico City. The overwhelming numerical superiority of Hidalgo's forces should have been able to smother their opponents. They almost did so, in fact, but their fatal lack of leadership and confusion allowed the better discipline of the militia to save it from annihilation.

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[1] The horrible sequel to the September massacre came three months later. The Alhóndiga was used by the insurgents as a prison for captured Spaniards. When General Calleja marched west to put down the insurrection, hanging and shooting as he came, Hidalgo's men abandoned Guanajuato. As a last gesture of defiance they broke into the Alhóndiga and hacked the prisoners to death with machetes.

Even so, it was a victory of a sort for the insurgents, and Allende tried to persuade his chief to follow it up and take the capital. Precious time was wasted in quarrels and indecision, until Hidalgo discovered one day that Calleja was descending on him from Querétaro. By this time the frenzy of the tumulto had given place to lethargy and indifference. The spirit which Hidalgo's Indians had shown against Trujillo had vanished. An unaccountable panic, or boredom with the game, started them homeward, and nothing could stop them.

The leaders of the movement, with a fraction of their original forces, retired to Guadalajara, which Hidalgo had made his capital, and there Allende was put to work organizing the mob into some sort of striking force. He cast cannon and manufactured hand grenades. Muskets were scarce. The army was again recruited to 80,000. But the insurgents were not given sufficient time to perfect themselves. Calleja, who in energy and military ability, as well as in ferocity, was the most formidable soldier of the day, was approaching Guadalajara with a force of 6,000.

Again the lack of leadership condemned the insurgents to almost certain destruction. Hidalgo allowed his Indians to continue their suicidal habit of immobilizing themselves on hilltops at Puente de Calderón on the River Lerma. The two armies met on January 17, 1811. Calleja's mobility, discipline, and superior arms (his men were Indians and mestizos) overcame the disparity of numbers. He took the initiative and kept it. For several hours the insurgents defended themselves desperately, but finally, confused by a grass fire, it was said, they broke and fled. Those who were not cut down deserted in droves.

Now the folly of allowing the military forces to be led by a religious enthusiast was sufficiently patent to all, and Hidalgo was deposed by his officers and Allende made generalísimo. It was far too late. Hidalgo's government fled from Guadalajara to join the insurgents of the south, while

Hidalgo and his military staff set out northward in the hope of finding support among the erstwhile insurgents of Coahuila and Texas. But they found no friends. The ragged remnants of their army were surprised and captured by ex-insurgent Colonel Ignacio Elizondo near Saltillo on February 21. The staff was marched across the 200 miles of desert to Chihuahua. There the clerics were separated, and the rest were shot as traitors. Hidalgo was condemned for heresy and other crimes by the ecclesiastical court, released to the "secular arm," and faced a firing squad on July 31, 1811.

Soyez juste! I find it difficult, I admit, to treat Hidalgo with the kindness of Priestley and Gruening. If one could only go by his proclamations Hidalgo would come out as one of the great spirits of the age. "*We are resolved to enter into no arrangement which does not have as its basis the liberty of the nation, and the enjoyment of those rights which the God of Nature has given to all men, inalienable rights which will be sustained by letting rivers of blood, if necessary.*"

Jean Jacques Rousseau and rivers of blood! Well, the rivers of blood existed outside of Hidalgo's imagination, at any rate. He shot his prisoners with religious conviction for the glory of liberty. *Odium theologicum.* I am not looking for sweet reasonableness in a jacquerie, but I cannot help thinking that if the movement had been directed from the beginning by a strong leader like José María Morelos the outcome would not have been such an unrelieved tragedy. *Death to the gachupines* worked both ways.

Then, as a fitting climax to his brief day in the sun, the old man, after four months in chains at Chihuahua, four months of contemplation and prayer, came to himself and, in his phrase, "the sleep left his eyes." At the threshold of death his early beliefs returned to comfort him, and he poured out his troubled soul in a *mea culpa* which for sheer poignancy has few equals.

"Who will give water for my brow and fountains of tears for my eyes? Would I might shed from the pores of my body the blood that flows through my veins, to mourn night and day for those of my people who have perished, and to bless the eternal mercies of the Lord! Would that my laments might exceed those of Jeremiah . . . so that in clarion tones I might tell the chosen people of their crimes, and in my deep grief call the whole world to see if there is pain as great as mine! . . .

"Ah, America! Ah, Americans my compatriots! And ah, Europeans my progenitors! Have pity, have pity on me! I see the destruction of the soil which I have wrought; the ruins of the fortunes which have been lost; the infinity of orphans I have made; the blood which in such abundance and temerity has been shed; and—this I cannot say without fainting—the multitude of souls which dwell in the abyss because they followed me. . . .

"All ye who inhabit the earth be my witnesses! Be my witnesses all ye who have shared the excesses into which I have plunged, blind and ungrateful! I have offended the Almighty, the sovereign, Europeans and Americans. . . . I desire and beg that my death make for the glory of God and His justice, and that it be a convincing plea for the instant cessation of the insurrection; and I conclude these last weak words with the protest that I have been, am, and shall be throughout eternity a Catholic Christian, and that as such I believe and profess everything that our Holy Mother Church believes and professes; that I abjure, detest, and retract whatsoever I have said to the contrary; and, finally, that I hope the prayers of the faithful throughout the world, and especially those of these dominions, shall interpose for me, so that the Lord and Father of Mercies, who grants me death from love and pity for my sins, may vouchsafe me His blessed Presence.

MIGUEL HIDALGO."

Royal Hospital, Chihuahua. May 18, 1811.

Hidalgo abjured the insurrection, and the insurrection abjured Hidalgo. His disgusted government joined José María Morelos in the wild south country, to continue the unequal struggle for four years more. Morelos was also a parish priest, a friend and pupil of Hidalgo, but in every respect superior to him. He was the greatest *guerrillero* in a land where the word has meaning. He was also a statesman, perhaps Mexico's best.

A glance at some of the principles of Morelos' state may serve to explain why he was deserted and sacrificed by the wealthy Creole class which was so hot for independence —on its own terms. Among the orders issued to his officers is one which is particularly illuminating. "All the large haciendas whose cultivated area exceeds two [square] leagues should be rendered useless, because the effective pursuit of agriculture consists in having many individuals devote themselves to the cultivation of a small area which they can attend with their labor and industry."

His state was based on the "manifest heresy" of popular sovereignty (so denounced by the Inquisition in 1808). In his message to the Congress of Chilpancingo in November, 1813, he laid down the broad lines of his Republic.

1. America is declared independent of Spain or any other foreign power.
2. The Catholic religion is the only one tolerated, but the Church is to be supported by tithes only; all other obventions are abolished. The sole interpreters of Catholic dogma are the secular hierarchy.
3. Sovereignty resides in the people, and is exercised by them through their elected representatives; government is divided into three functions: legislative, executive, and judicial.
4. All government employees are to be Americans.
5. The only foreigners to be tolerated are to be skilled artisans, free of political ties and capable of giving instruction in their trades.

6. Slavery and caste distinctions are abolished; all citizens are to be known simply as Americans.

7. Laws are to be applied to all alike, without exception or recognition of any privilege. "Since good law is superior to any man, the laws passed by our Congress should be such as to encourage constancy and patriotism, and should moderate both opulence and poverty; [they should] increase the wages of the poor in such wise as to improve their habits and banish ignorance, rapine, and theft."

8. The right to possess property is sacred; a man's house is inviolable.

9. Judicial torture is abolished.

10. Government monopolies are abolished, as well as the sales tax and tribute; the government to be financed by an income tax of five per cent and by an import duty of ten per cent on all foreign goods.

Morelos' ideas (none of them original with him) show him to have been a political and economic revolutionary—a very conservative one in the light of today—but they explain why he had to fight almost alone. His program in its essentials has been that of every radical movement in Mexico since his day, and is the heart of the Revolutionary program of 1941.

For five years Morelos led his small and well-disciplined force in a series of engagements, the brilliance of which has never been surpassed in Mexico, but he was never strong enough to win a decisive victory. His government, split by honest differences of opinion and petty jealousies, was driven from pillar to post by the hard-hitting Calleja. Crowded out of Michoacán in 1815, it resolved on a flight across the country to Tehuacán in southern Puebla. Morelos was given the dangerous assignment of protecting the march. The royalist forces were hot on the trail. Morelos had to make a desperate stand to save his government from capture, and was himself cut off and captured. His men were shot, and he was brought to Mexico City for trial, while crowds of curious people blocked the road to get a glimpse of the famous guerrillero. After a farcical trial the Inquisition unfrocked him, and he was condemned to be shot for treason. Excitement was so intense in the capital that the authorities would not risk a public execution, and he was brought to San Cristóbal Ecatepec, where, proud and unrepentant, the noblest figure of the Republic met his death on December 22, 1815.

The true greatness of Morelos lies in this: in spite of his power as the head of the military establishment, he rejected every title but that of "servant of his country" and subordinated himself to the civil authorities which he had created–mistakenly, in my opinion, for the circumstances did not allow time for the long deliberations of a confused parliament. His humility and unselfishness permitted the small spirits of his government to sacrifice him for their own safety, and the great Morelos died serving his ideal to the end.

* * *

The heritage of the six years' war was frightful. Commerce, industry, agriculture, mining, and transportation had come almost to a full stop. The back country was full of bandits–men who had escaped Calleja's vengeance and who had developed a taste for lawlessness. The best lands lay idle; hacendados and rancheros had been driven off or slaughtered; the country was hungry. A large professional army had been created–Indian and mestizo soldiers and Creole officers, who had fought alongside of Spanish regulars and discovered that they were in no wise inferior to them. Most ominous of all, perhaps, was the fact that in military service, with its immediate satisfactions in the form of honors and brilliant uniforms, the young men of New Spain had found their true calling. *From then on all governments were to stand or fall by their consent.*

Meanwhile, affairs in Spain had followed a dizzy course. Spanish insurgents had been fighting King Joseph Bonaparte and his tremendous brother for six years, with the effective aid of the Duke of Wellington and the British Army. The question of government during the Peninsular War was a very difficult one. Rival juntas sprang up like mushrooms all over the country, each claiming to represent Ferdinand VII and the Spanish people. The strongest of them, the Junta Central of Seville was finally recognized by most as the legal government, but itself was split by all sorts of notions as to what sort of government it should set up. The leaders of it, although committed to the restoration of Ferdinand, were very far from favoring the restoration of the old autocracy. They had imbibed many of the concepts of the French Revolution and British liberalism, and they planned a new and liberal Spain —all this, of course, without consulting Ferdinand. The outcome of their debate was the calling of a constitutional convention at Cadiz, which in turn gave birth to the famous Constitution of 1812. It made Spain a constitutional monarchy, with the Rights of Man, Freedom of the Press, Representative Government, and the rest of our familiar parliamentary apparatus. It did away with the Inquisition, but appeased the alarmed clergy by establishing the Catholic Church and tolerating no other. The overseas dominions were given equal representation with the Peninsula, but the seat of government was to remain in Spain.

Representatives from the whole Spanish world gathered at Cadiz, and the congress was immediately split into the usual factions of Spaniards and Americans. The American delegates insisted on rights of local government which would make the dominions virtually independent. The Spaniards would tolerate no such heresy. The congress was a lawyers' paradise. Its touching faith in the efficacy of the written word led to endless argument and amendment, until the constitution began to resemble in length its monstrous kin, the present constitution of California. Meanwhile, the half-starved soldiers of Spain fought in the frozen mountains of Castile, and in New Spain conspiracy and treason flourished, with the results that we have seen.

Napoleon's defeat in 1814 brought the longed-for Ferdinand back to Spain. A delegation from the Cadiz government made him swear to observe the new constitution, and the *liberalitos* sat back to enjoy the millennium. Ferdinand, however, had not the faintest desire to become a constitutional monarch. He speedily gathered about him the numerous reactionary elements of the country, scrapped the constitution, and inaugurated a reign of terror. The liberals were jailed or exiled; the Inquisition was restored. In a word, Ferdinand, with the backing of the Holy Alliance, did his best to obliterate even the memory of the French Revolution. The monarchist party took heart everywhere. It is interesting to note that Ferdinand's restoration and the defeat of Morelos were coincident. The Creoles had their Ferdinand at last, and their argument had lost its punch. The gachupines were in the saddle and meant to stay there. They had learned nothing by the insurrection.

In Spain Ferdinand's stupidity made him undertake the suppression of the liberties which even the reactionaries had begun to enjoy. The exiled liberals, operating principally from London, kept up an unceasing fire of criticism and propaganda. Ferdinand's complete bungling of the government of his prostrate country alienated his supporters. Masonic clubs and secret societies plotted his overthrow. The Army itself was shot through with Masonic doctrines. For six long years Spain seethed and bubbled with plots and repressions, until one day in March, 1820, the troops of one Colonel Riego, about to be embarked for service in Buenos Aires, did a right-about and marched on Madrid.

Spain was electrified. Liberals and Masons came out of their holes and flocked to Riego's banner. The reactionary government fell without striking a blow, and Ferdinand hastened for the second time to swear allegiance to the Constitution of 1812. Liberal folly and wishful thinking could go no farther than to accept the oath of that proven trickster. In 1822 the "100,000 sons of St. Louis" were to teach the liberals of Spain that royalty could not be lightly insulted.

The *coup d'état* of Riego was welcomed in New Spain by liberal and separatist Creoles and unrepentant insurrectos. The Spaniards, of course, received the news with consternation. Then, as the Cortes of Spain showed itself more radical and anti-clerical, and as the restored freedom of the press brought out all the ancient rivalries and hatreds, the rift widened beyond hope of healing. The Constitution of 1812 was proclaimed for the second time in Mexico City on May 3, 1820, and the whole political deck of New Spain was reshuffled and dealt. The new hand was astonishing. For immediate independence from Spain: the upper clergy, the Spaniards, the conservative Creoles, and the Audiencia—all the more respectable moneyed and privileged elements. The erstwhile liberals and insurrectos were in a state of confusion and did nothing.

What the new conspiracy needed was military force, and it was at hand in the person of Colonel Agustín de Iturbide, one of Calleja's most able officers in the suppression of the insurrection, but now in disgrace for peculation with regimental funds and thirsting for a chance to rehabilitate himself. In the south country remnants of Morelos' army were still active under General Vicente Guerrero. Iturbide had no difficulty in persuading the honest and simple-minded Guerrero to join the glorious movement for independence. The two met at Iguala. The outcome of that meeting was the first of the long series of "plans" which make the history of Mexico so confusing. A "plan" is the proclamation of the aims or principles of the leaders of a rebellion. It is the justification for the seizure of the government by force. Force can be exercised only by the military. Hence the "plan" is the instrument by which a military leader makes his act palatable to the rest of the country. "Plans" sometimes mean something; more frequently they mean that somebody wants power and what goes with it. *All governments of Mexico, from Iturbide's day to this, have been established by military force and justified by "plans." The "plan," then, may be considered as the fundamental constitution of Mexico.*

Iturbide's "Plan of Iguala," proclaimed on February 24, 1821, had many things to recommend it to a war-weary country. It proclaimed immediate and complete independence from Spain, thus pleasing the Creoles and the insurgents; it proclaimed equal treatment for Spaniards and Creoles, thus easing the chronic alarm of the gachupines; it proclaimed the supremacy of the Catholic religion and the intolerance of all others; and, most significant and portentous of all, it placed the guarantees of all these things in the hands of the Army, which thereupon took the name of the Army of the Three Guarantees, shortened to *Trigarante.*

The skeptics, the Masons, and the liberals were outnumbered and out-maneuvered. The Army of the Three Guarantees had a walk-away. A new viceroy, O'Donojú, who landed at the time in Vera Cruz, although himself a Mason, speedily came to face-saving terms with Iturbide's overwhelming force. Royalist officers and troops were readily suborned and did little to resist the trigarantes, and, after a period of parading about the country to let it know who was master, Iturbide took the capital and the government on September 27, 1821. Mexico was free at last!

The tragedy of Mexico cannot be measured. Her spurious "freedom" was the logical outgrowth of the Spanish plot of 1808, which brought with it the destruction of law.

Iturbide's seizure of power was the triumph of lawless force and lawless privilege. Perhaps the alternative was anarchy, as Iturbide's apologist, José Vasconcelos, suggests, but I find it difficult to see in Iturbide anything but an egotist with a Napoleonic complex. He brought independence, to be sure, but at the price of delivering his country into the hands of the very forces which had made independence desirable. If one compares Iturbide with the lofty Morelos, the "liberator" shrinks to his true dimensions.

The new rulers of Mexico were the military of Iturbide's complexion. Law was their will; assassination and betrayal were their weapons; their price the wealth of their country. Under their rule Mexico was to be the scene of bloody *opéra-bouffe* for long years, until the whole inglorious farce should be knocked into a cocked hat by Winfield Scott and a handful of Yankees.

Iturbide wasted no time in showing his true colors. He used the ragged patriots of Guerrero for parade purposes until he was safely in the capital, and then scuttled the whole party of the insurrection. A hand-picked "Committee of Notables" proving more difficult to manipulate than he had counted on, Iturbide called a Constitutional Congress in February, 1822, to decide on the form of the new government. The congress was split by the usual feud, but was not sufficiently docile to his will either. It not only attempted to finance the government by reducing the salaries of the military, but it had the temerity to propose the reduction of the Army to half its size! Mexico, however, could not hope to elude her fate by any such legalistic nonsense. Her master knew how to deal with lawyers and such. In the night of May 18, 1822, troops rushed through the streets of the capital shouting "Long live the Emperor! Long live Agustín I!" Léperos and a hired claque joined in the cry, and by dawn Mexico City was witnessing a classical tumulto. It found Iturbide willing to sacrifice himself for his country, and he accepted the imperial crown from his own hands.

There is no need to review in detail the ridiculous spectacle of Iturbide's "reign." The "emperor" dressed himself up to look the part. Court etiquette and rules of procedure became the most important business of the government. A brand-new flock of condes, marqueses, and lords- and ladies-in-waiting strutted about with their "riband, star, and a' that," while a desperate Congress exhausted its ingenuity to finance the extravagant show.

Forced loans disgusted the rich; clerical reaction suppressed liberties; Masons and liberals renewed their secret meetings; lampoons and pasquinades at the expense of the make-believe royalty were scrawled in public places. Finery filled no bellies. Worst of all, Iturbide treated his ancient comrades in arms with a more than regal condescension. The commandant of the port of Vera Cruz was a dashing young officer with the gift of gab and a boundless ambition, who had distinguished himself against insurgents and Spaniards and who had been the first to acclaim the "liberator" and "emperor." Coming to Mexico City to receive his expected reward, he was received with a withering coolness, and returned to Vera Cruz nursing dark thoughts. His name was Antonio López de Santa Anna.

Iturbide had shown the way for his own undoing. His calamitous government, his ruinous fiscal policy, his idiotic pretensions to royalty, his clericalism—all these things rapidly cemented a powerful opposition. The patriots, the Masons, the old republicans and insurgents, and disappointed army men had plenty of reason to destroy their "emperor." Santa Anna, whose single talent was to smell out a popular cause and put himself at the head of it, regardless of principle, "pronounced" against Iturbide in December, 1822. By February he had enough adherents to formulate the indispensable "plan."

The "Plan of Casa Mata" had nothing extraordinary about it. It demanded the abolition of the "empire" and the banishment of Iturbide, and the establishment of a liberal federal republic under a constitution. The nominal head of the movement was an old insurgent general by the name of Guadalupe Victoria, who was brought in for the purpose and thus became (later) the first president of Mexico. News of the pronunciamento spread with great rapidity, and, almost before he knew it, Agustín I was on his way to exile, under penalty of death in case he should return.

Iturbide's fatal legacy to his country was a method, which was to be perfected by the most mischievous figure in the tragic history of the Republic, the actor Antonio López de Santa Anna.

Chapter XX

SANTA ANNA'S LEG

It is not easy to follow the thread of reason through the generation which followed the Independence of Mexico. The loosely cemented strata of colonial society split apart in the cataclysm of 1810-1821, and their mending is still an uncertain and remote aspiration. The strata, broadly speaking, may be labeled: conservative (the upper clergy, and the landed and money elements generally); liberal (anti-clerical, anti-Spanish, democratic in theory); military (the growing officer caste, usually running with the conservatives, but apt to favor the winner); and the forgotten Indians, who supplied the cannon-fodder. It was the beginning of the age of *caudillos*. A caudillo is a military chieftain, like Iturbide or Santa Anna or Francisco Franco, ruling by force, whatever the pretext. All Spanish America fell into the hands of caudillos a century ago. Most of the "republics," in fact, are still in their hands.

When the old authoritarian system of Spain collapsed, it left no body of citizens, in the Peninsula or in America, trained to assume responsibility. If a situation came up in the old régime it was the autocrat's business to meet it. Those outside the bureaucratic hierarchy were supposed to obey and ask no questions. Autocracy was irresponsible and it fostered irresponsibility. The so-called ruling class of New Spain was no ruling class in the sense that it could take over the machinery of government and run it, say, as the upper and middle classes of England. The wealthy and the privileged of New Spain were as irresponsible as the Indians they despised, and, when their privileges and wealth were threatened, they acted like spoiled children and threw things around. It was their recklessness and frivolity that made them overthrow their government in 1808, and they continued to overthrow every government that in any way menaced their comfort. They were a lawless society; they had destroyed law. So they fell an easy prey to the first uniformed brigand who was dangerous enough to enforce his will. There were, unfortunately, a great many uniformed brigands, and one had to make the difficult choice of backing the winner.

The more respectable Creoles, as a rule, avoided politics. The type of self-made general with whom they would have to deal filled them with disgust, and they were content to live apart, paying blackmail and extortion, while the country was bled white by its military parasites. There is no other explanation for the toleration of *santanismo* (Santa-Anna-ism). With a modicum of civic spirit the numerous Creoles could have shaken off their incubus, if they could have buried the hatchet and made the effort—the long hard effort which is the price of self-respect. But the comfortable habits of generations were more precious. Life in the capital continued to be as gay and reckless and frivolous as if the massacre of the Alhóndiga had never taken place. Cockfights and bullfights and the eternal round of flirting and parading on the boulevards—the amusements of a class that had no useful thing to do.

There were honorable exceptions—men who fought on the conservative or liberal side for a new and finer country—like Lucas Alamán, Miguel Ramos Arispe, or Valentín Gómez Farías, but the exceptions were too infrequent to change the picture materially. While Santa Anna's unpaid army was fighting to keep Texas in the Republic, there was little indication in the capital that Mexico was facing the gravest crisis in her history. That was the generals' business, and what the better people thought of the generals may be judged from the fact that no great opprobrium attached to Santa Anna for his disgraceful defeat at San Jacinto and his more than disgraceful explanation of it. Generals were expected to lie and steal and betray one another, and sell out to the highest bidder. In a word, santanismo. And santanismo existed because those who might have prevented it were too indolent, or selfish, or unaware to make the effort. Perhaps the deadliest heritage of Spanish autocracy was the psychology of irresponsible privilege that kept (and keeps) the Creole in a state of resentful aloofness.

Meanwhile, the country lay prostrate, and its body was fought over by uniformed bandits in and out of the government, and by the foreigners who thought to inherit the wealth of the Indies, now that Spain was out of the way. The misery of Mexico under its gay exterior may be imagined. But Creole society carried on. A new upper class appeared, the military, parvenu and jealous of its position, the men over-decorated, the women over-dressed. Fanny Calderón was a bit shocked by their vulgarity.

"18th [of January, 1840].–For the last few days our rooms have been filled with visitors, and my eyes are scarcely yet accustomed to the display of diamonds, pearls, silks, satins, blondes, and velvets, in which the ladies have paid their first visits of etiquette. . . . The Señora B——a, the wife of a General, extremely rich, and who has the handsomest house in Mexico. Dress of purple velvet, embroidered all over with flowers of white silk, short sleeves, and embroidered corsage; white satin shoes and *bas à jours;* a deep flounce of Mechlin appearing below the velvet dress, which was short. A mantilla of black blonde, fastened by three diamond aigrettes. Diamond earrings of extraordinary size. A diamond necklace of immense value, and beautifully set. A necklace of pear pearls, valued at twenty thousand dollars. A diamond sévigné. A gold chain going three times round the neck, and touching the knees. On every finger two diamond rings, like little watches. . . ."

The political life of the time has the elusive quality of a masque. One reads the lines, and they seem to mean something, but they are confusingly remote from the action. The best actor and leading man of the masque was Antonio López de Santa Anna, the incredible Santa Anna, whose first public appearance of importance was at the overthrow of Iturbide. Santa Anna had an uncanny stage sense, and could time his entrances and exits to a second. He also knew when to stay in the wings.

Iturbide's fall had left affairs in a terrible muddle, and the Congress hastily patched up a provisional government, the Poder Ejecutivo, which was put in the hands of three good insurgent generals, Guadalupe Victoria, Nicolás Bravo, and Pedro Negrete. Generals had inherited the "principle of authority." These three men had proven their worth on the battlefield, but civil government was a mystery to them, and they were given a cabinet to administer the various services. The man chosen for the key position, the Minister of State, was the young man whom we first met at the massacre of the Alhóndiga, Don Lucas Alamán.

Alamán was a Creole aristocrat who by some miracle had escaped the sloth which too frequently paralyzed the members of his class. He was educated as a mining engineer, first at the School of Mines in Mexico City, later in France and Germany. He visited England in the spring of 1815 and there saw the light, for in England's industry, in her conservative and (relatively) responsible aristocracy, in her opulence, and, above all, in her orderliness, he found the qualities which his own country lacked. There could be no Alhóndiga in England. Alamán's admiration for England and for English institutions was to guide him in all the plans which he was later to conceive for the rehabilitation of Mexico. Order became Alamán's god; to achieve order he was to ally himself with those who had destroyed order, and with the one who was to destroy Mexico, Antonio López de Santa Anna.

Alamán had served as Minister of State under Iturbide, and his youth, energy, knowledge, and integrity made him the one bright spot in that fantastic adventure. He was a benevolent despot of the eighteenth century, born out of his time. He despised and dreaded the half-baked jacobinism of the liberals and did his utmost to set up a powerful centralized government. He had a clear vision of the growing power of the United States, and he laid down a plan of action which, if it could have been carried through, would have altered the history of the western hemisphere.

When Alamán was drafted by the provisional government, he continued the policy he had begun under Iturbide. His greatest fear was the absorption of Mexico by the United States. He blocked Manifest Destiny at every opportunity, and he planned the settlement of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, then one of its objectives. To remedy Mexico's thin population and lack of capital (most of which had gone with the Spaniards), Alamán proposed the admission of skilled foreign mechanics and of foreign capital, under strict government supervision. But, above all, he insisted on a strong government for the protection of capital and industry (Alamán had read his Adam Smith). His defiance of the forces which he thought would destroy Mexico brought him the violent opposition of the radicals in Congress—men who were honestly suspicious of autocracy, or men who wanted a weak government for purposes of their own. For a year Alamán was attacked as a monarchist, priest-lover, autocrat, Hispanophile, gachupín, and a number of less pleasant things, and he was forced to resign in January, 1824.

At the opposite pole stood the liberal leaders, Miguel Ramos Arispe and Valentín Gómez Farías, whose political creed was a rationalization of *death to the gachupines.* Their solution for the government of their country was complete decentralization, a federation of semi-autonomous states. The liberal Congress under their leadership gave birth to the first constitution of Mexico, the Constitution of 1824. In it everything was done to weaken the executive. The *federalistas* even imitated our mistake of having the two highest offices go to the opposing candidates for president—a mistake which was to cause endless confusion and bloodshed.

The federal system was probably the worst that could have been adopted under the circumstances. It was based on the fallacy that the old Spanish provinces had somehow been independent nations, with a culture and destiny of their own. It assumed that everything in the Spanish system was bad and that the only thing to do was to throw it all out and start over again. It naïvely ignored the weight of three centuries of habit. The Constitution of 1824 erected a weak government in a country ravaged by war and overrun by bandits; riveted upon it the tyranny of provincial caciques; allowed no effective check on the Church, or on the Army, which by that time was a privileged caste, infinitely more rapacious than anything ever seen in colonial times; and it imposed an ill-understood democratic ideology upon a country which had known nothing but autocracy for three hundred years. In short, the federal system was an invitation to anarchy.

With all its pretensions to democracy, the Constitution of 1824 was in no sense "the people's choice." What people? The bulk of the population of Mexico had no choice and never have had. The constitution was imposed by the radical group in Congress, with the backing of foreign agents and provincial satraps. But there it was, and nineteen independent republics were created, each with the fatal power of accepting the constitution or ignoring it—a tradition which still exists and which makes the state governments of Mexico something of a puzzle to outsiders.

The first president chosen under the new constitution was the amiable and patriotic insurgent general, Guadalupe Victoria, who had been Santa Anna's figurehead in the "Plan of Casa Mata." The vice-president and choice of the minority was one of Morelos' former generals, the decent and civilized Nicolás Bravo. But always generals!

The government was a hodge-podge selected from all factions. The hated and indispensable aristocrat, Alamán, was called to head the Ministry of State, and, through innocence or patriotism, he worked for the crazy-quilt government as if he thought it stable or desirable. He negotiated with George Canning for the recognition of Mexican independence, and signed a commercial treaty with England at the same time. He continued his policy of opposing Manifest Destiny, and was the thorn in the flesh of our meddling minister, Joel Poinsett. He refused to open the Santa Fe Trail to American commerce until the United States should also conclude a commercial treaty, while he discreetly put obstacles in the way of that treaty. His "perfidy" led him to oppose the admission of settlers into Texas. The radicals and Poinsett's "York Rite" Masons labeled Alamán anti-progressive, Anglophile, undemocratic, despotic; they accused him of high crimes, misdemeanors, and treason; and they brought about his second fall, in September, 1825. Alamán's disappearance was a triumph for the centrifugal forces of Mexico, and, as Poinsett wrote Henry Clay, it was also a victory for the United States over England.

Victoria lasted out his full term of four years—a phenomenon which was not soon to be repeated. It was disturbed only once, by the "pronunciamiento" of Vice-President Bravo in December, 1827. The "plan" demanded the suppression of secret societies and the expulsion of Joel Poinsett. It was the answer of colonial society to the liberal government, but Bravo was unsuccessful and had to flee the country. The exile traffic was to strain the scanty capacity of the Vera Cruz road for many years.

In the election of 1828 the radical "York Rite" party, supported by Poinsett, ran the old Indian insurgent general, Vicente Guerrero, against the "Scottish Rite" conservative candidate, General Manuel Gómez Pedraza, a former officer in the royal army. (The reader should not let himself be confused by the Masonic labels. The lodges only in the loosest sense represented opposing philosophies, being hardly more than pressure groups supporting this or that candidate or measure, according to their interests.) Pedraza won the election by a vote of ten to nine (each state having one vote), and Guerrero was persuaded to "pronounce."

1829. For four years Santa Anna, like Br'er Fox, had lain low, but now his nose told him that a liberal wind was blowing, and from his lair in Vera Cruz he "pronounced" Guerrero president. The Congress dutifully changed its vote. Santa Anna was arbiter of Mexico.

One of the incidents of the Victoria administration had been the expulsion of the Spaniards who had remained in Mexico under Iturbide's "Three Guarantees." It was a reprisal against Spain for refusing to recognize Mexican independence; it was a triumph for the patriots who were carrying on their ancient feud with the gachupines; but in other respects it was a calamity. The Spaniards were the thrifty middle class of Mexico; many of them had Mexican wives and families; they ran the shops and small factories, mines and haciendas; and they owned a substantial part of the vanishing liquid capital of the country. Their expulsion cleared the way for British, American, and French exploiters, who, unlike the Spaniards, were not readily assimilated and who usually sent their money abroad. The expulsion was also a reprisal for the idiotic attempt of Ferdinand VII in 1829 to reconquer Mexico by landing a small expeditionary force at Tampico, under one General Isidro Barradas.

What! With Santa Anna in Vera Cruz? President Guerrero gave the leading man his cue, and Santa Anna led a division against the sick and starving Spanish troops, who were already defeated by the heat and mosquitoes. A short and violent action, and the Fatherland was saved. New title: the Liberator.

It was high time, because Guerrero, having been given dictatorial powers in the face of the Spanish invasion, was suddenly discovered to be trampling under his heel the most sacred heritage of the Fatherland; he was a Jacobin, an atheist, a Mason, a destroyer of religion, and the rest —the usual cry of the centralist crowd (the clergy and the respectable). Vice-President Anastasio Bustamante "pronounced." Santa Anna to the *pronunciados:* "I shall stubbornly oppose those who, on any pretext whatever, would temerariously hurl from the presidential chair the Illustrious General, Citizen Vicente Guerrero—and they will succeed in doing so only over my dead body, when I shall have perished defending the chief magistrate of the Nation!"

Santa Anna's nose had failed him. More "pronunciamientos," and soon the whole country, with the exception of a few die-hard liberals under General Juan Alvarez, had accepted Bustamante. Santa Anna made the best of it and retired to his estate, Manga de Clavo. The Congress signed on the dotted line, and Bustamante occupied the uneasy seat of the presidency for the first time on January 1, 1830. At his back he had "the good will of the clergy, the applause of the well-to-do, the effective support of the Army, the clericalism of the Senate, and the indecision of the Chamber of Deputies."

The wheel had made a complete revolution back to despotism. For three years Mexico was ruled by terror, suppression, imprisonment, and assassination—all to establish order and protect property. The foulest blot on the Bustamante administration was the murder of Guerrero. The old chieftain had joined forces with Juan Alvarez and was making himself strong in his ancient stamping-ground of the south. Defeated at Chilpancingo by General Bravo, he retired to Acapulco, was kidnaped by an Italian sea-captain, and sold to the government for 50,000 pesos in gold. That Lucas Alamán, again in the government, should be a party to such a disgusting affair, shows how even a man of his principles can be deceived by jesuitical reasoning. He must have order, and Vicente Guerrero, one of the finest of the old stalwarts, faced a firing squad in the village of Cuilapa, on February 14, 1831.[1]

The country was wild with rage and grief; that is, the "mob" was. The *yorkinos* made capital of that and the natural reaction against the despotism of the Bustamante government. The sensitive nose of Santa Anna again warned him that the will of the people was being flouted (after three years), and he "pronounced" in favor of General Gómez Pedraza, a *moderado.* A chorus of "pronunciamientos" informed the conservatives that the game was up, and Pedraza was installed as provisional president on January 3, 1833.

The new Congress showed its gratitude to Santa Anna by giving him the additional titles of "Liberator of the Republic" and "Conqueror of the Spaniards," and, on March 30, 1833, elected him president. The vice-president was Valentín Gómez Farías.

Santa Anna, who detested the dull business of government, had one of his attacks of ill health and left the Poder Ejectivo to Gómez Farías. The liberal leader was fifty-two years old; he had studied medicine and political science; and he was a tremendous anti-clerical. Under his lash the Congress indicted the ministers of the Bustamante government, and was particularly ferocious against Alamán, who was obliged to go into hiding to avoid arrest and worse. The Congress worked hard for forty-five days; its program was a complete liberal house-cleaning. Its enemies were panic-stricken and raised a protest which reached all the way to Manga de Clavo. Santa Anna had to come back to quiet the storm. His return was the occasion for a demonstration. "Pronunciamientos" demanded that he become dictator of the country. Santa Anna was puzzled. After twenty days in power he left the stew to cook a while longer, and went back to Manga de Clavo.

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[1] The reader will be pleased to learn that Picaluga, the sea-captain who took the thirty pieces of silver, was executed as a bandit in Genoa, in 1836.

The liberal Congress and Gómez Farías worked in the knowledge that the time was short. They meant to put in a whole liberal program, regardless. They attacked the Spaniards who had escaped the expulsion; they secularized the missions of California; they encouraged emigration to California by exempting the colonists from tithes; they decreed the seizure of the Cortés estate; they limited the military and ecclesiastical tribunals to those who enjoyed immunities.

The uproar grew. A certain Captain Escalada "pronounced" in Morelia. His "plan": "This garrison protests that it will sustain with all its strength the Holy Religion of Jesus Christ and the immunities and privileges of the clergy and the Army which are threatened by the usurping authorities." It proclaimed "the Illustrious Conqueror of the Spaniards, General Don Antonio López de Santa Anna, Protector of the Cause and Supreme Chief of the Nation."

The Illustrious Conqueror was authorized by the Congress to command the Army in person. His actions, however, were ambiguous. A few days later he was "taken prisoner" by General Mariano Arista, "until he shall consent to become supreme Dictator and Redeemer of Mexico." Gómez Farías managed by some miracle to put down the rebellious forces of the capital, and generally showed more strength than one might suspect. So Santa Anna "escaped" from his captors and appeared before the Congress; he swore to "defend the Constitution till death," that his hatred of tyranny was "eternal." The Congress simply did not believe him. Meanwhile, the pronunciados besieged Puebla, and Santa Anna marched forth again. "We march to bring aid to the brave sons of Puebla who ... are defending their sacred walls with a valor worthy of being perpetuated in the annals of our history!"

While the two armies sparred, Santa Anna had one of his usual strokes of luck. The capital was invaded by the cholera. The superstitious populace was told that it was a sign of divine wrath against the impiety of Gómez Farías and the liberals. On the very day that the Congress had proved its atheism by abolishing tithes in all the Republic and by secularizing the University, Santa Anna returned to the capital, announcing that he had suppressed the revolt.

The government was delighted. It declared the clergy subject to civil action for using the pulpit for propaganda against the government; it expelled the Bishop of Puebla. Then it reached the height of madness; it cashiered all the officers who had engaged in the rebellion!

"Pronunciamientos." Santa Anna was invited by Army chiefs to cut loose from the liberal rabble. Their slogan: "*Religión y Fueros!*"—which is to say, the clergy and the Army above the law. It was still too early to decide, and Santa Anna had to retire to Manga de Clavo, because his health had been broken in the service of the Fatherland.

Meanwhile, the liberal Congress went on destroying Religion. The country was in danger! And who do you suppose came forward to sacrifice himself for the Fatherland? Right!

1834. April. The "Plan of Cuernavaca." The garrison "pronounced" for Santa Anna, for the dissolution of the Congress, for the expulsion of Gómez Farías, for the suppression of the militia (liberal), for the protection of Religion, and the rest. The caudillos "pronounced" in unison, all except the caudillo of Zacatecas, which Santa Anna took and sacked. In the capital, Te Deums and solemn masses. Religion was saved. Santa Anna, paladin of the Cross. Gómez Farías exiled to New Orleans. From a newspaper of the day: "Yesterday the execrable Gómez Farías at last left this capital, crushed under the just imprecations of a whole city . . . weighed down by his terrible and lawless deeds. . . . Like a comet of ill omen, Gómez Farías brought cholera and misery; immorality and tyranny; espionage and treachery; ignorance and sacrilege; the exaltation of criminals and the abasement of honest men; the triumph of the filthy rabble and the crushing of the select; the terror and mourning of families; proscription, tears, and death in a thousand most horrible forms. . . ."–in other words, *the long litany of vituperation which has been leveled at every liberal leader from José María Morelos to Lázaro Cárdenas.*

1834. Santa Anna was strong enough to dispense with his mask. For eight months he ruled as absolute dictator, with soldiers and martial law. He dissolved the liberal Congress; he discharged all government employees suspected of liberal connections; he put his own men into national and state offices. When the situation was well in hand and Gómez Farías' house-cleaning was completely undone, he called a new Congress in December, 1834. But the Congress turned out to be so incredibly reactionary that Santa Anna was frightened at the thoroughness of his job. The new Congress meant to settle once and for all the nonsense of popular sovereignty. It ignored the constitution and set up a new "principle of authority" in the shape of the *Poder Conservador* (Conservative Power), a supreme executive responsible to no one, not even to its creators–a monstrous Frankenstein of an executive. It was the *Fuehrerprinzip* in all its purity–lately dusted off and given a new coat of paint. And Br'er Fox, he lay low. He knew his people.

1835. In spite of Alamán's warnings, Texas had been allowed to fill up with settlers–rude men who despised the "greasers" and who had some reasonable complaints of Mexican notions of justice and administration. The inevitable happened, and Sam Houston and his Texans "pronounced" for independence. The Great Liberator could not let slip an opportunity of saving the Fatherland again in true Napoleonic style, and he unsheathed his unconquerable blade, which, as he put it, in more appropriate language, "was always the first to descend upon the necks of the rash enemies of the Fatherland!"

Santa Anna established his headquarters at San Luis Potosí, where he set about creating an army out of several thousand green recruits rounded up by his press gangs. He had energy, and he had a colossal nerve. There was not a cent in the war chest. His men had nothing to eat for days at a time. Using his authority as president, he borrowed several thousand pesos from the *agiotistas* (a new class of blood-suckers who lived by lending money to the bankrupt government at three and four per cent a month); he manufactured munitions; he requisitioned horses, oxen, and carts; he drilled his men into the semblance of an army; and in the dead of winter he set out across the desert on the six-hundred-mile march to San Antonio.

It was a frightful ordeal. Men and animals died from cold and hunger, drowning, exposure, and disease. Santa Anna was a great general; human life meant nothing when the Fatherland was in such pressing danger. And then he had to keep ahead of the revolution which he expected to break out at home from one day to the next. Six weeks of marching brought him to San Antonio and the Alamo.

March 6, 1836. The old Franciscan mission of El Alamo was surrounded—Bill Travis and his hundred and fifty against Santa Anna's thousands of starved recruits. An hour's fierce fighting, brave men against brave men. Numbers and fire-power won. Santa Anna continued the tradition of the wars of independence and killed his prisoners.

He did not know that *death to the gringos* also worked both ways.

At San Antonio the expected revolution caught up with him, and he had to decide between saving the Fatherland by going back to Mexico and saving it by completing the conquest of Texas. He chose the latter alternative as offering the more glory. He separated his army into three divisions, which overran the country, spreading terror and desolation. Santa Anna himself acted the great conqueror. He issued orders and counter-orders with such profusion that his troops marched until they dropped from fatigue. He resembled Stephen Leacock's general, who mounted his horse and rode off in all directions. He led his division on a forced march of forty miles in one day and descended upon Harrisburg, the capital, which he took without a shot. Santa Anna was invincible, and the Texans were cowards.

And then the climax, or tragic ending. Santa Anna met Sam Houston's Texans at San Jacinto, and with unparalleled frivolity encamped on a rise within a short distance of the enemy. He was awakened from his slumbers by a yell which was to haunt him for the rest of his days: "*Remember the Alamo!*" Houston's revenge was almost too complete. He lost three men killed and 18 wounded; Santa Anna lost his whole army: 400 dead, 200 wounded, 730 prisoners. In fifteen minutes!

Santa Anna escaped on horseback. He disguised himself in some cast-off clothing he found in a hut, but was captured and betrayed by the salutes of his own men. The Texans were for shooting him on the spot, but Sam Houston was too humane or too canny to allow it. With the pistols of scowling Texans nervously twitching, Santa Anna dictated the orders which were to free Texas of Mexican troops.

Sam Houston started his fallen enemy off for Mexico, according to agreement, but at Galveston a crowd of new men insisted on shooting "Santy Anny." They were argued out of the notion, and the Liberator again escaped death by a hair's breadth. The Texans then sent him to Washington to have a talk with Andrew Jackson, who got nothing out of him but a lot of meaningless protestations, and Santa Anna was back in Mexico in the spring of 1837, just a year since the Alamo and San Jacinto.

In some unexplained manner Santa Anna in a single year had undergone a complete metamorphosis. The traitor who had lost San Jacinto and Texas was now, at least in the minds of his admirers, the hero who had saved the honor of the Fatherland at the Alamo. They put on a great display of fireworks when he landed at Vera Cruz. Concerts, speeches, poems to the Savior of the Fatherland. Would he consider going back to the presidency? But Br'er Fox knew better than to rush things. He could afford to wait. He retired to Manga de Clavo and dictated his version of the war in Texas—a version in which he won all the victories and his subordinates suffered all the defeats.

1838. A number of claims had been made by French residents against the Mexican government. One M. Remontel ran a pastry shop at Tacubaya. Some army officers on a party one night invaded his shop, locked him up in a back room, and proceeded to devour all his pastries. They knew how to insult a Frenchman. The indignant proprietor filed a claim with the government for 800 pesos. It was the smallest claim in the huge bill for 600,000 pesos presented by Louis Philippe's minister, but it gave its name to the famous "Pastry War." The Mexican government ignored the claim, and the port of Vera Cruz was blockaded by the French fleet on April 16, 1838.

Six months of tiresome haggling over the bill coming to nothing, Admiral Baudin opened fire on the decrepit old fortress of San Juan de Ulúa on November 27. From his retirement at Manga de Clavo Santa Anna heard the distant cannonading. What! A war going on and he had not been informed? Infamy! He shouted for his famous white horse and galloped off toward Vera Cruz. He arrived when the negotiations for surrender were going on. Treason! He borrowed a skiff and had himself rowed out to the fortress. He tried to persuade the commandant to blow the place up rather than surrender to the foreigner. But the capitulation had already been signed, and Santa Anna raged back to Manga de Clavo. He may have had a hand in President Bustamante's refusal to accept the terms. Orders came that Santa Anna was to take the field against the French. San Jacinto was forgotten.

Santa Anna against the King of France! A good match. But the bored Admiral Baudin refused to fight. Indeed, if it had not been for the Prince de Joinville there would probably have been no war at all. The Prince, however, was cut out of the same Byronic cloth as Santa Anna, and thirsted for glory. France, *la douce France*, had been insulted, and only blood could wipe out the stain. *Revanche!* So Baudin prepared a landing party, and Santa Anna was awakened by shouting and firing in the street. In his underclothing, with his uniform and his sword tucked under his arm, the hero escaped, leaving General Arista to face the French.

Once outside, Santa Anna was his old self. Orders flew, and soon a detachment of Mexican troops was exchanging shots with the Prince de Joinville's marines from behind a barricade. French honor was appeased after several hours, and the Prince withdrew to his ships. Victory! Santa Anna mounted his white horse. Charge! At that moment the god of luck took him by the hand and led him into the path of a French cannonball. His left leg was shattered below the knee. Never would the Fatherland be allowed to forget Santa Anna's leg.

The death which the hero expected momently to overtake him resembled the death of an Italian opera star, who manages to sing lustily for ten minutes while his life blood flows in a red torrent. On his carefully arranged death-bed the dying hero lay, while strong men wept unashamed, but his agony did not prevent his dictating a fifteen-page last message to his beloved fellow-citizens.

"I also beg the Government of the Fatherland to bury me in these same sand-dunes, so that my companions in arms may know that this is the battle-line I have marked out for them."

The death scene was what is known in Hollywood as a "wow." Santa Anna might well say: "Mexico is worth a leg!" The pitiful stump of Santa Anna's leg was to be paraded with such effect that revolutions and more revolutions would have to come, thousands upon thousands of Indian boys would have to die, and half the territory of the nation would have to be given up, before that leg could be paid for. Santa Anna loved his wound with pathological intensity. He never tired of talking about it. He affected invalidism, and a romantic sadness ennobled his features. Fanny Calderón was impressed.

"In a little while entered General Santa Anna himself; a gentlemanly, good-looking, quietly-dressed, rather melancholy-looking person, with one leg, apparently somewhat of an invalid, and to us the most interesting person in the group. He has a sallow complexion, fine dark eyes, soft and penetrating, and an interesting expression of face. Knowing nothing of his past history, one would have said a philosopher, living in dignified retirement—one who had tried the world, and found that all was vanity—one who had suffered ingratitude, and who, if he were ever persuaded to emerge from his retreat, would only do so, Cincinnatus-like, to benefit his country....

"It was only now and then that the expression of his eye was startling, especially when he spoke of his leg, which is cut off below the knee. He speaks of it frequently...."

Santa Anna had two great loves: himself and his fighting-cocks. Next came the gaming table, where his gambler's vanity made him coolly risk great sums on the flip of a card with the same unconcern with which he staked men's lives and his country's destiny. And now his leg, which became almost as dear as his fighting-cocks.

1839. Unhappy Mexico had become so inured to "plans" and "pronunciamientos" that they no longer caused a ripple of excitement. The capital fell a prey to its ancient plague of tumultos, with mobs yelling for this or that general, or against this or that action of the government, or just yelling. Banditry had become a semi-respectable profession, and gallant highwaymen who apologized to their female victims were not unknown. In the north, Santa Anna's old companions, Generals Urrea and Mejía, whom he had sold out in Texas, "pronounced." The Poder Conservador was frightened. Would the mutilated Liberator please accept the presidency?

The death scene had the touch of genius, but it was only a rehearsal compared with the Return of Cincinnatus. Slowly and painfully the carriage of the great man bumped over the stones of the neglected Vera Cruz road. At every stop, arches, bands, bunting, rockets, speeches, poems, military parades, while the pallid hero lay limp and unsmiling, acknowledging the ovations with a wave of his languid hand, and his fluttering trouser-leg mutely reminded the Fatherland of his sacrifice. Who so small now as to remember San Jacinto?

The grateful Poder Conservador voted him the title of *Benemérito de la Patria*—"Well-deserving of the Fatherland"—and made him president for the fifth time. Why he should wish to rule is a mystery for the psychologists to solve. The treasury was empty, as usual, and a rebel army was about to descend upon the capital. Never mind. He would rule with or without money, by terror, confiscation, and oppression. Mejía and Urrea took Vera Cruz and marched on Puebla. Santa Anna's order to his generals: "The firing squad for all captured officers!" Mejía's last speech: "Santa Anna is doing to me what I should have done to him, only he is shooting me three hours after my capture, while I should have shot him in three minutes!"

The country was saved again. Santa Anna began to put on unmistakable airs of royalty—between cockfights. But he was bored. The eternal financial crisis was a bore. The "plans" and "pronunciamientos" which continued to pop were a bore. He was homesick for his cockpit at Manga de Clavo. "Ill health" compelled his retirement, and General Nicolás Bravo was left to face the music.

1840. Hell itself broke loose as soon as the dictator was safely out of the way. The *puros* (i.e., liberals), with the veteran Valentín Gómez Farías again at their head, sought to restore the Constitution of 1824, and General Urrea, who had escaped Santa Anna's firing squad the year before, was on hand to make the indispensable "pronunciamiento," on July 15, 1840. For twelve days the forces of Bravo and Urrea were locked in a bloody embrace in the streets of the capital, and yet no word came from Manga de Clavo to tell them who should win. How could Santa Anna know which side was the stronger? Stalemate. An arrangement had to be made, and Gómez Farías trudged off into exile again and the liberals lay low.[2]

1841. General Anastasio Bustamante again president, by grace of Santa Anna and the Poder Conservador. But

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[2] Some idea of the cost of governing by "pronunciamiento" may be had from the accounting for expenditures of the government for 1840, during Santa Anna's dictatorship.

Ministry of State	329,270 pesos.
Ministry of the Interior	2,843,001 pesos.
Ministry of the Treasury	1,547,631 pesos.
Ministry of War and Marine	17,116,878 pesos.
Total	21,836,780 pesos.
Estimated net income for 1841	8,074,100 pesos.

That is to say, *almost three-fourths of all the expenditures of the state went to the Army. The Army sucked up well over twice the total income*, the difference being borrowed from loan sharks (*agiotistas*).

Bustamante was unhappy in his efforts to get money. General Gabriel Valencia "pronounced." This time Santa Anna's nose did not fail him, and he warned Bustamante to hearken to "the penetrating cry of a generous people." Bustamante did not hearken closely enough, and Santa Anna "pronounced." His forces moved rapidly from Vera Cruz to Puebla, from Puebla to Tacubaya. More fighting in the streets, twenty-eight days of it. Dead soldiers rotting in the gutters. General Bustamante was at his wits' end to outplay the Benemérito de la Patria. Suddenly inspired, he did a back somersault and himself "pronounced" for the liberals and the Constitution of 1824. General Almonte, who commanded a division and did not believe in Bustamante's sincerity, "pronounced" on his own account for the Constitution. An absurdity. A military junta from the three forces came to an arrangement, and General Bustamante followed Gómez Farías into exile. But that left the presidency vacant. And who do you think was chosen? Right again.

1841. By this time Santa Anna had thrown off all pretense of ruling by law. There was no law but his caprice. Soldiers and more soldiers. His personal bodyguard was made up of 1200 picked men in gorgeous uniforms. Money? The country wanted a dictator. Now it could pay for him. Santa Anna "borrowed" hundreds of thousands of pesos, until the country was picked as clean as the bones of a dead Indian soldier in Texas. It is only fair to add that the money was not all wasted. Santa Anna's vanity needed monuments with his name on them. A new theater was built; a new market; the city was paved. Dictators have their uses. If there had been any railroads in Mexico the trains would undoubtedly have run on time, or nearly so.

1842. The apogee of the glorious dictatorship. Mexico City was a continuous parade. Fiestas and holidays, celebrating Santa Anna's birthday, Independence, and what not; drums and bugles and salvos of artillery; solemn masses at the cathedral. "His Serene Highness," as Santa Anna was now addressed, had to be amused.

September 27, 1842. The greatest and most solemn celebration of the year. The corpse of Santa Anna's leg was dug up at Manga de Clavo and brought to the city. The garrison, His Serene Highness's bodyguard, the infantry, the artillery, the cavalry, the cadets from the Military Academy of Chapultepec, all dressed for parade, escorted the urn containing the grisly relic across the city to the magnificent cenotaph which had been erected for it in the cemetery of Santa Paula. Ministers and diplomats stood, hat in hand. Speeches, poems, salvos. A graceful acknowledgment by the Liberator himself, who celebrated the occasion by wearing a brand-new cork leg—which may still be seen by the skeptical.

1843.The bill came high. Taxes and more taxes; a twenty per cent duty on imports; a "voluntary contribution" by all the householders of the capital; bottomless depression. Santa Anna, bored by the complaints, retired again to Manga de Clavo and his cockpit, leaving General Bravo to carry on. But Bravo could not cope with the roar of hatred which went up on all sides, and the hero was hastily recalled, on March 5, 1843. The seventh return of Cincinnatus.

The country fell a prey to cynicism and boredom; boredom and a deepening hatred for the little man with the cork leg; hatred of his ceaseless extortions, collected by squads of soldiers; boredom with his emptiness and vanity. But no boredom exceeded that of His Serene Highness, who seized the first opportunity to retire to the fine new estate of El Encero which a grateful country had given him.

General Valentín Canalizo, who was left to run the show, satisfied no one. How could he? Another weary cycle of "pronunciamientos," and Cincinnatus was sent for again. The eighth time.

1844. Texas, whose independence Mexico refused to recognize, wished to enter the Union. The United States government pressed for the settlement of old claims. War threatened. Santa Anna the patriot would shed every drop of his blood before he would relinquish a foot of the sacred soil of the Fatherland. If the gringos wanted war he would show them. He ordered a levy of 30,000 new troops, and his press gangs rounded up droves of uncomprehending Indian boys. The defense program was to be financed by a forced loan of four million pesos, source unrevealed.

The black despair of the country and hatred for the government made themselves known in the only way possible: General Mariano Paredes "pronounced" in Jalisco. Santa Anna marched west to meet him, but no sooner had he left the capital than a furious tumulto broke out. The statue to the Benemérito de la Patria was torn from its pedestal; the shiny new cenotaph in the cemetery of Santa Paula was violated, and the Leg was destroyed. Then the garrison of Mexico City "pronounced." Santa Anna was caught between two fires. That in the capital was the more threatening, and he hastened back to put it out. But his troops were fed up and began to desert. By squads, by companies, by regiments, they deserted, while small arms, cannon, and equipment filled the ditches. In a short week the army of Santa Anna was nothing but a memory. With his cook and two adjutants he fled to his mountains of Vera Cruz, was recognized by a party of Indians, captured, and brought to the fortress of El Perote, where a military tribunal tried to find an excuse to shoot him. He was saved by his stump. Exile. Universal relief. Only one general did him the honor of "pronouncing," while the clergy sang Te Deums for their and their goods' delivery.

1845. March 1. The United States announced the annexation of Texas. Minister Almonte asked for his passports. The Mexican government promptly declared war. War? Surely no country in history was ever less prepared to fight. The army: 20,000 men on the rolls, *24,000 officers.* The treasury was empty. The despair of the people flamed up in hatred against the criminal stupidity of their rulers. General Paredes "pronounced" again. Half a dozen other generals in all parts of the country "pronounced." The war could take care of itself. General Paredes marched on the capital. General Valencia prepared to defend it. Reshuffle and deal. New hand: General Paredes, president and dictator of Mexico. Paredes to the country: "I am resolved to make my ideas triumph or perish in the attempt. I am determined to punish no one for his past misdeeds, but I shall shoot anyone who opposes me, be he archbishop, general, minister, or anyone else!"

The garrison of the capital could not stomach the pretentions of Paredes, and "pronounced." The country was without a leader. The country was in danger. . . . Yes, Santa Anna was back from his exile, uninvited. He was received with distrust, but received. The smart Yankees had allowed him to come through the blockade at Vera Cruz. Santa Anna went to El Encero to await the inevitable. The factions in the capital were bidding for his support. The liberals looked stronger. The liberals won it. Valentín Gómez Farías, also back from exile and leading his party, begged Santa Anna not to offend his people by withholding his presence from them. And Santa Anna, now a liberal democrat, dressed in decent civvies, was driven in an ordinary hack through the silent streets to the palace, where he was persuaded to accept the presidency. In the treasury were exactly 1,839 pesos to finance the war with the "Colossus of the North."

Whatever his defects, Santa Anna was an incomparable organizer. He announced a new levy and beat together an army of 18,000 men. Without money. Gómez Farías, now vice-president, moved heaven and earth to get funds. He slapped a sequestration order on the goods of the clergy for four million pesos, none of which got to Santa Anna in time. The Generalísimo could not wait. The Fatherland was really in danger. Santa Anna drove his starving and freezing recruits the 300 miles from San Luis Potosí to meet Zachary Taylor. He lost 4000 from desertion, hunger, and disease. It was an army of desperate and fainting men that faced General Taylor in his well-prepared position at Buena Vista on February 22. The excellent American artillery chopped through the Mexican ranks, but they came on, taking position after position at the point of the bayonet. They fought magnificently; they fought until they drove Taylor's men to the last ditch; they fought until they dropped from hunger and fatigue. A heavy storm stopped the battle, and Santa Anna retired under cover of darkness. His men could stand no more. He had lost 1500 in killed and wounded. If the American troops had not been fought to a standstill they could have annihilated their exhausted enemy. As it was, Taylor allowed Santa Anna to withdraw unmolested.

The Retreat from Moscow. The army which entered San Luis Potosí seventeen days later was an army of barefooted skeletons. The news of the defeat was received in Mexico City by the usual "pronunciamientos" against the government. Deadlock between Gómez Farías and the pronunciados. The Great Arbiter hastened to the scene. He was the only one who could decide the conflict, *because he was the only man without convictions*. And, of course, he reassumed the presidency.

At Vera Cruz the army of Winfield Scott had landed. There is no need of repeating the story of Scott's mad invasion of Mexico. He had about 10,000 men. Mexico City alone could have raised an army of several times that size, *if it had wished to do so*. The Mexicans were defeated in advance by hatreds, jealousy, poverty, despair, indifference, and apathy. Why fight? What could be worse than the degradation they had already suffered? Many of the "decent people" (i.e., the upper clergy, the people of property, etc.) even welcomed the American invasion as a relief from the intolerable military anarchy. Santa Anna proved them correct.

Mexico City was not defended. Why? Because Santa Anna did not wish to share the glory with General Gabriel Valencia, commander of the northern division. There is no other admissible explanation for the American victory. The Americans were heavily outnumbered; their supply line was three hundred miles long and undefended; they had no reserves and no way to get any. With the spirit he had shown at Buena Vista Santa Anna should have crushed Scott. But, when everything had been set for a meeting and Valencia was in a strong position, Santa Anna ordered him to retire. Valencia exploded with fury and frustration; he cursed Santa Anna for a coward and refused to obey. Whereupon Santa Anna withdrew his own troops and left Valencia to be cut to pieces. Santa Anna himself marched out of the city with his fresh army without firing a shot. He abandoned the scanty defenders of the Castle of Chapultepec to certain destruction, including the boys of the Military Academy, the famous *Niños Héroes;* he marched past the convent of Churubusco, held by a company of volunteers, who fought until their last cartridge was burned.

Benemérito de la Patria!

What a price for perfidy and bombast, for vanity, brigandage, and cynicism! What a price for Santa Anna's leg!

The rest is in the schoolbooks: the Treaty of Guadalupe Victoria; the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny; Mexico dismembered and helpless.

The paranoiac Santa Anna led his troops off intact, while he proclaimed, declaimed, and heaped abuse upon the "betrayers of the Fatherland." His disgusted army melted away, as it had done once before. By the time it reached Puebla there was only a handful left, and His Serene Highness deserted in his turn and fled to Tehuacán. A band of wild Texans followed and came within an ace of capturing him. "Remember the Alamo, Santy Anny?" The fugitive tried to escape into Oaxaca, but the governor would not let him enter. The governor was a Zapotec Indian by the name of Benito Juárez. Santa Anna decided that the enemy was safer than his own people, and he surrendered to Major Kenly at El Perote.

Enough!

Benemérito de la Patria!

* * *

CURTAIN.

Santa Anna, actor to the last, entertained his captors with a banquet at El Encero, dictated an eloquent farewell message to the Fatherland, and exiled himself to Venezuela, April 6, 1848.

The immense disaster that he and his kind had brought upon Mexico had the immediate effect which the reader has already anticipated, "pronunciamientos" by all parties and caudillos, denouncing the betrayal of the Fatherland, and denouncing each other. Death to the monarchists! Death to the liberals! Death to the santanistas! Death!

The provisional government gave way to a "moderate" government, under General José Joaquín Herrera, who, with his successor, General Mariano Arista, did miracles to meet the financial crisis. The fifteen millions of conscience money paid by the United States after the war were soon gone. The moderates suffered the fate of their kind and pleased no one. And then General Arista committed the unpardonable sin. *He cut down the Army!*

"Pronunciamientos" in Guadalajara. Arista resigned. The provisional president, Ceballos, dissolved the Congress by force and made an arrangement with the pronunciados.

Confusion. The Army and the conservatives decided it was time for a strong hand. Their "plan": Religion and property, and the rest, *under the perpetual dictatorship of Antonio López de Santa Anna!* He had not even been consulted.

The conservatives were not without powerful arguments in favor of setting up a dictatorship. The federal constitution had amply proven the folly of weak government. The disaster of 1848 had destroyed every vestige of national unity. Mexico had become many Mexicos in fact. Every state, city, and municipal district aspired to complete independence. The municipal district of Cuernavaca seceded from the state of Mexico, and the district of Yautepec seceded from Cuernavaca. Mexico split into cells, and the cells into more cells, each with its little caudillo making and interpreting laws, and collecting taxes and import duties as he pleased. Justice was bought and sold at the lowest prices in history. A British agent, one Mr. Falconnet, got wholesale rates when he bought thirty-five members of the national Congress for 60,000 pesos. Commerce was at a standstill. The police of the capital gathered up the bodies of those who died of hunger. The soldiers quartered in Mexico City acted like an invading army, and sacked and murdered at will. The situation was intolerable, and men of all persuasions began to look wistfully back on the days of Santa Anna. *Del mal tomar lo menos*—of evils take the lesser. The conservatives, led by Lucas Alamán, saw no help for Mexico but a monarch, but the best substitute they could think of was the old dictator, whom they hoped to control. They were to sink still lower in years to come.

Santa Anna, now sixty, was brought back from Venezuela, and, for the eleventh and last time, limped into office, in April, 1853. The dying Alamán, worshiping order to the last, consented, on his own terms, to head the government of the man he despised and needed. Alamán to Santa Anna: "In your hands, General, lies the happiness of the

Fatherland." He had no illusions about the man whom he meant to use merely as a stop-gap for a monarchy. In any case, the old aristocrat, probably the only disinterested figure among the conservatives, was past leading any party. He finished his tragic and monumental *Historia de México* and died, June 2, 1853, a month after taking office.

Without the brain and integrity of Alamán to restrain them, the conservatives went the whole way to Oriental despotism. Santa Anna was made Perpetual Dictator and was dressed up to look like royalty. The liberals were suppressed or driven into exile; Benito Juárez made cigarettes for a living in New Orleans. A number of liberals joined old Juan Alvarez in the south and invited Santa Anna to come and get them. The dictator now had the best military machine he had ever commanded, but somehow it lacked punch. His campaigns were fiascos. The liberals had no army to speak of, but they refused to be crushed. On the contrary, their movement gained strength daily. The dictator was up against something he could not understand, a war of ideas, a revolt against the whole stupid, suffocating, backward-looking notion that the destiny of a people can be directed by a handful of willful men with guns.

Santa Anna reverted to type and went in for lavish and expensive display. Uniforms, liveries, brass buttons, fancy coaches, and such-like folderol. Money ran low, and he sold the Mesilla of Arizona to the United States for ten million dollars, with which he was able to buy the loyalty of his generals for another year. But the liberal movement would not down. Provincial caudillos joined it one after the other, until the dictator began to feel besieged. Worst of all, he was bored. The lick-spittle sycophants, the silly titles, the nauseating adulation, the endless round of meaningless functions, would have turned the stomach of a hardier man. He made the discovery that he was hardly more than a prisoner in the hands of the gang that had brought him back from his comfortable hacienda and his fighting-cocks. He became acid and irritable. He was lonely in his imitation royalty, and in his loneliness takes on dignity for the first time in his life. The great actor had made one too many last appearances. Then, one day in August, 1855, with a touch of his old audacity, he ordered up his coach and galloped off to Vera Cruz and exile, and off the stage of Mexico.

Seventeen years later the old man was allowed to hobble back to the Fatherland he had served so ill. He spent his last four years in solitude, and died forgotten, on June 21, 1876.

Chapter XXI

HIDALGOS

The conservative elements of Mexico fought (and still fight) with such single-minded fury to preserve at all cost their ancient privileges that it may not be out of place here to insert a note on the phenomenon of Spanish nobility (*hidalguía*), as practiced in America. Elsewhere I have mentioned the feudal heritage of the Spanish conquistador, his firm belief that he was somehow noble, because his profession was the bearing of arms. By the time of the Conquest this tradition had so permeated every stratum of Spanish society, and the numerous privileges and the prestige of the noble state were so highly prized, that few Spaniards, regardless of origin, did not aspire to it. The discovery of the New World let down the bars. The constant protest of the early governors of the Indies was that every cobbler or blacksmith, as soon as he landed, cast aside his tools and set himself up as an hidalgo. Rodrigo de Albornoz, *contador* (accountant) of New Spain in the time of Cortés, voiced the general complaint in a letter to Charles V.

"If in any of your dominions, Caesarian Majesty," he wrote, "it was ever necessary to prescribe the manner of life of your subjects and vassals, here it is even more necessary, for, since the land is rich in food and in mines of gold and silver, and everyone becomes swollen with the desire to spend and possess, by the end of a year and a half, he who is a miner, or farmer, or swineherd, no longer will be so, but wishes to be given Indians, and so he spends everything he has on ornaments and silks, and, if he has a wife, the same thing holds true for her. In like fashion other mechanics cease the pursuit of their trades and incur heavy expenses, and do not work or extract gold or silver from the mines, in the belief that they will be given Indians to serve them and support their families in gentility."

Outside of the economic consequences of the Conquest—and, of course, intimately linked with them—the tradition of nobility had the most profound effect upon the psychology and social habits of the whites of New Spain, and upon all those who in later centuries aspired to the same privileges. The noble state rested upon two broad bases: the right to bear arms and the right to hold land, particularly the right to hold land—the more land the more nobility. This curious obsession led merchants to abandon their commerce, miners to give up mining, and manufacturers to cease manufacturing, to become country squires and landlords, surrounded by retainers.

Death to the gachupines! Land and Liberty! Bread and Land! Such have been the slogans of Mexico's social revolutions, from the jacquerie of Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 to the inept Madero's mild attempt at political reform, and the fierce agrarian revolt of Emiliano Zapata, which left the haciendas of the south charred skeletons of former grandeur. All these movements were essentially revolts against the hereditary nobility's monopoly of land.

Of all the ills bequeathed by the Spaniards to the New World, one of the most grievous was the institution of *latifundismo*—the tendency of the whites to grab land and set themselves up as semi-independent feudal lords over vast estates. There is nothing peculiarly Spanish about latifundismo. It appears under certain conditions with such unfailing regularity that it seems to obey a universal law. The conditions under which it arises are well known. They are, in brief: cheap land; a cheap, abundant, and more or less servile laboring class; ready markets for produce; and an exploiting class either trained in arms, or able to hire mercenaries to put down "labor troubles." The Spanish Empire had all these elements. When any one of them is missing the system is apt to collapse. The Cotton Empire of the Old South and the great fruit, cotton, and produce "ranches" of California are examples of modern latifundismo.

Writers trying to explain the fall of Rome agree on the destructive effects of the huge slave-operated *latifundia* which spread like a blight over Italy, debasing rural life, dislocating the population, and filling the cities with masses of degraded and indigent vagabonds. The sturdy and independent *comunidad* of Spain gave way before the Roman tax-collector and landlord. The Spanish peasant had the choice of becoming a slave or a bandit, and he bitterly learned to bide his time. He is still doing so. The Spanish Republic of 1931 to 1939 was, among other things, a revolution against latifundismo, and it was crushed by the classes interested in maintaining the privileges of a landed nobility.

To understand the psychology of latifundismo in Mexico we must go back to the fifth century, A.D., when the Visigothic barbarians overran Spain. The Visigoths became a class of professional warriors. Their power rested upon their ability to fight and upon their possession of land. In time it became their exclusive privilege to bear arms and possess land. They became a military landed nobility. The reader will at once recognize the essentials of feudalism, which, in its simplest terms, was a contract between a land-holding and arms-bearing warrior and those who needed his protection.

The Visigoths, with the help of the Roman bishops (see Chapter XVI), held on in Spain for three hundred years, without, however, winning the loyalty of the Spaniards. On the contrary, their tyranny and exactions were such that the Spaniards welcomed the army of Arabs and Berbers which paraded through the country in 711 and chased the Gothic nobility into the fastnesses of Asturias and the Pyrenees. In their distant retreat the Gothic knights reverted to their ancient trade of marauding; warfare became their way of life and their livelihood. As time went on and their marauding took on the dignity of a crusade, more and more warriors went into the profession, until it is safe to say that a very considerable part of the free population of Christian Spain became noble, at least in the high privilege of bearing arms and living on spoils.

At the same time, however, true nobility required the cachet of land, and, as the class of warriors grew, the amount of land available became scantier, until Castile became a country of little nobles, and, in fact, got its name from that circumstance. (Castile derives from *castella* = little forts, or castles.) A great many of these barbarians were left without any land at all, and had to make a living by hiring themselves out to anyone who could pay the price, to Moslems and Christians indifferently—somewhat like the generals of the period of Santa Anna. They were the men whose descendants, centuries later, became the conquistadores of America.

There were, of course, innumerable gradations of nobility, depending upon the value of one's horse and armor, or upon the amount of land held, or upon the length of time that one's ancestors had professed the Christian faith, or upon the purity of one's blood—that is to say, the absence of degrading Moorish, Jewish, or peasant strains. *Pureza de sangre*, purity of blood, was required in at least one's four grandparents. In any case, the noble was a privileged being and was always superior to the non-noble, however rich or talented, who did things with his hands, or who was soiled by commerce in useful articles. Your true noble did recognize that the king was a step above him in nobility, but beneath the king he was any man's equal and most men's superior—*del rey abajo ninguno*, none under the king, as the old saying has it.

The great haciendas created by the ruling class of Mexico became in time, especially after Independence, when government control was removed from private enterprise, little principalities, in which the masters lived in full enjoyment of the traditional privileges of a noble caste. The center of the hacienda was the "big house," walled and fortified like any medieval castle. The Indian population of the hacienda, although nominally hired for wages, was, in effect, a body of retainers, tied to their lord by the intangible and material bonds characteristic of the feudal relationship. The hacendado was the patriarch. He was the godfather of the Indians' children; he gave away their daughters in marriage, or took them as concubines; he was the judge of their quarrels; he protected them against political enemies. In short, he was their *patrón*. In exchange, he lived on their labor, permitted no strikes, and punished slackness and disobedience with greater or less rigor, according to his nature, without interference. He maintained on the hacienda a church and a school, in which his hired chaplain taught the Indians somewhat of the Christian doctrine, but particularly the virtues of humility and obedience. The hacendado was an irresponsible despot, and the hacienda was a faithful miniature of the old Hapsburg state, without its law.

The benefits of the feudal contract were not altogether one-sided. If the Indian serf had no real liberty (which he had never known anyway), and if he worked for illusory wages which he never saw, on the other hand his subsistence was usually assured by a patch of ground, his precious *milpa;* he had a permanent abiding place among his own people and familiar surroundings; and his folkways (*costumbre*) were not ordinarily interfered with. He had frequent holidays, in the celebration of which he could get gloriously drunk and escape for a while from reality, and in his old age he might count on a few years of authority as a village elder and spend his dotage in the sun chattering with his cronies. He was, to be sure, kept in ignorance of the white man's cultural adornments, but, when I look over most of the literature he would have had to read, in case he had been taught, the atrocity seems over-emphasized.

A society based on latifundismo was bound to be static. If the master-and-serf relationship was to endure, neither the upper nor the lower stratum could be allowed to step over the boundaries of recognized conventions. Hence, the extraordinary bitterness of the conservatives toward the liberal "betrayers" of their class, such as Valentín Gómez Farías. José Vasconcelos, for example, who has lately retreated into the sixteenth century, can find no words harsh enough (in his dyspeptic *Breve Historia de México*, 1937) to describe Gómez Farías.

The worst features of latifundismo were apt to occur in the second and third generations, when the spoiled offspring of the hacendados got into the habit of going off to Mexico City and Paris to live, and entrusted the hacienda to an overseer, whose duty was to keep an adequate revenue flowing in. Absentee landlordism meant the driving of land and workers beyond their capacity; it meant the seizure of the Indians' milpas and the *ejidos* of the villages; it meant tyranny and hardship, and the neglect and eventual ruin of the estate. Landed families rose and fell with such regularity that our old saying about there being three generations from shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves became a proverb in Mexico also.

A man might be a farrier, a carpenter, or an arriero. No matter. By hard work and frugality, or by any means, he would acquire a piece of land. He had taken the first step toward nobility. If he could accumulate enough to save his children from useful and humiliating work, he was well along the way. Succeeding generations became progressively more emancipated, until, if the estate could stand the strain, the family emerged as a useless colony of parasites.

This was only possible, of course, because there existed a class to support them.

The men of the Creole landed families, by all acounts, had an amusing enough time of it—in their youth some schooling, no discipline, a great deal of love-making, riding, gaming, quarreling, and cockfighting. Flirting was a fine art, in both sexes, and obeyed an elaborate code which mystified the priggish Marvin Wheat (*Travels in Western Mexico*, 1857).

"While the fair sex trip along with downcast eyes and solemn countenances to the sacred shrine, to dip the curved finger in holy water, and cross their foreheads, typic of their faith . . . , the sterner sex have taken their position, to behold youth and beauty gracefully glide by them. . . . This habit of gentlemen taking their position outside of the church, who should regard gallantry and the grace which adorn the fair sex, and walk, in like cases, in company with ladies to show them a due respect and courtesy, I cannot but condemn as mischievous and impertinent."

In later life, men of exceptional gifts might have a go at polite letters, or take up a learned profession, especially the law. Others went into the Church, a few into politics, a great many into the Army, and some into gentlemanly farming. Able and intelligent men appeared among them in the same proportion as among other classes, but they rarely achieved more than respectable mediocrity in science or in letters. The burden of nobility was too heavy, and talent faltered and came to a halt in the face of universal indifference and disapproval.

The women of the landed class were condemned to a life, the vapidity of which makes one yawn at the very thought. The impressionable Mr. Wheat never tired of praising their graciousness and kindness, "though they may not be able to read and write. The instruction of the female sex is, I am told, most shamefully neglected, for the largest portion of them is far from having the first rudiments of a

Spanish education." Fanny Calderón, although very sympathetic to Mexico in general, gave up when it came to the upper reaches of female society.

"*Quant à la morale*," she wrote to her friend Prescott, in 1840, "they *do nothing* from morning till night. The morning they pass in a most untidy deshabille covered with an old *reboso*, smoking a paper cigar, or rolling along in a carriage, dressed in blonde, velvet, and the most superb diamonds, that is, for a visit of ceremony; dresses *very* short and little white or colored satin shoes. In the evening they do nothing that I could ever find out, not even amusing themselves. I never saw a book in their hands or in their rooms. You may imagine that their ignorance is *total.* They are very amiable and good natured, but I do not wonder that so many become nuns, as I think they amuse themselves quite as well in a convent as at home. Of course there are exceptions, but *not* in the article of ignorance. There are some who sing well, some few who play, a *very* few who draw, but I do not know one who *reads*."

The *mores* of the gentry were (and are) singularly unchanging. It may have been due to pride, or it may have come from an uneasiness that, if any crack should be allowed to appear in their scheme of things, the brown flood would seep in and overwhelm them. They walled themselves in and became strangers in their own country. Anyone who has lived in an old-fashioned Mexican landed family (incidentally the most charming and hospitable people imaginable) cannot but notice the gulf which separates master and servant. Regardless of the size of the family, which is frequently vast, or of its poverty, which in these days is common, there is no hint of breakdown in the hierarchy. To a gringo plebeian it is curious to see two mutually exclusive societies living under the same roof. The mistress of the house is often an excellent cook, that is, of certain special dishes, and she spends a good deal of her time in the kitchen, but all the fetching and carrying, plucking and peeling, and the like, must be done by the servants, or she will lose face. She may go to the market and haggle over the price of eggs, but she may not carry them. The eldest daughter of such a household said to me one day in complete seriousness: "Yes, I suppose Diego Rivera is a great artist, in spite of his atheistic ideas, *but his wife. . . !* Do you know, I saw her the other day in the market *carrying her own basket like an Indian!*"

This is what might be termed psychological latifundismo, and it has not changed since 1840, or since 1540, for that matter, *and it is catching*. Those who would make Mexico over by breaking up the old haciendas neglect to consider the weight of that heritage. It is easily demonstrable that the passion for holding land, with the sweet privilege of ordering one's fellows about, pervades all classes. It is a folkway. The schoolmaster, Plutarco Elías Calles, was one of the stalwarts of the Revolution, the very prophet and spearhead of it, but he retired as one of the greatest landholders of Mexico. Luis Morones, the radical labor leader, the same. Revolutionary generals and pipsqueak bureaucrats, the same. All this in spite of the fact that latifundismo is economically unsound. Nobility does not take criticism kindly. Our own "peculiar institution" was hysterically defended, in the newspapers and from the pulpit, in the face of overwhelming evidence that the South was going bankrupt. F. L. Olmsted exposed the imminent ruin of the South in two remarkable books, *A Journey in the Back Country* and *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, which are as fine a piece of scientific reporting as one could ask for, but he was bitterly denounced as a damned Yankee abolitionist. Psychological latifundismo still hangs on in the South, just as it does in Mexico. The presence of a dark and presumably inferior race, ready to do one's bidding, is, I suspect, one of the chief props of the noble ego. But remember the Alhóndiga!

Thus in Mexico I have rarely talked with a member of the dying aristocracy without being met by a sort of ritual. "The Indians are an inferior race." "They will not work unless coerced." "They were better off under the old system." "They made better real wages, had more leisure, worked more efficiently, and were happier." "Education is bad for them, makes them discontented and 'uppity.'" "The hacienda system is the only one which will produce enough food to supply the country." "Look how things have been going since the Revolution." Etc. All this in spite of the fact that few haciendas in the old days were solvent. The hacendados had lived on borrowed money so long that paying off a mortgage was almost unheard-of. From the eighteenth century they had borrowed money on their lands, first from religious organizations, later from banks and loan-sharks, until the country was plastered with mortgages like a billboard. It became a tradition that one's obligations were sufficiently discharged by occasional payments of interest. A few bad years, and foreclosure made way for another noble family.

Out of this situation arose the tiresome repetition of the charge that the Church owned most of the soil of Mexico. It should be obvious that if it had not been the Church it would have been some other agency. Given the habits of the hacendados, it was inevitable that religious organizations should come to own numbers of bankrupt haciendas. This is not to argue that the Church should be in the money-lending business—a question which, fortunately, I do not have to decide. The bankruptcy of the hacienda system became clear when José Limantour, Minister of the Treasury under Díaz, began to call mortgages owned by the Bank of Mexico, whereupon the panic-stricken hacendados threw their support to Francisco Madero, himself a member of a great land-holding family, in the hope, I presume, that he would not betray his class.

The sharp stratification of society in Mexico has had several interesting effects. In the old days the white, by assuming superiority and by taking all the privileges—the better posts in the Church, government, and Army—by having a better education, by wearing better clothes and eating better food, and by living in better houses, surrounded by servants, was envied, resented, hated, and imitated. The white is out and the mestizo is in, and the mestizo is assuming the same marks of nobility which he formerly envied. On the heavy ground-swell of the Revolution, which was fundamentally Indian, the mestizo rode into power, and he now herds the Indians about in the traditional noble fashion—all for their own good, naturally, but I have never noticed the Indians being consulted about the various "plans" for their improvement.

Another effect of the Revolution upon the ex-noble has been to make him take refuge more than ever behind his shield of scornful aloofness. "Why do you always address me in French?" I asked a *licenciado*, whose family had been broken in the Revolution. "Why?" he answered, "because I don't want to be taken for a Mexican!" "The greatest calamity Mexico has suffered," I was assured by an ex-landholder of Chihuahua, "was the failure of the United States to take over the country in 1848. *You know what to do with the Indians*."

Several years ago I addressed a group of very respectable ladies in Mexico, explaining the techniques of government developed by the Spanish crown. When I had finished, to my astonishment I was more vigorously applauded than I thought my talk justified. "It was a great privilege to hear you, Dr. Simpson," one of them said to me, "and I wish more could have heard you. It's time we learned how our ancestors handled things. *They knew what to do with the Indians*."

Over the dinner table of a little hotel in a very remote town a few months ago, I listened to the local nobility discussing politics, and I took a few notes. "Have you seen the latest scheme of our government for communist education [the recent legislation for bringing primary instruction in line with the social program of the government]? Believe it or not, those swine are now going to teach our youngsters *the scientific truth*. What do they know about scientific truth, or any other kind, I'd like to know!" "What we need is another revolution, a real one this time, to get these revolutionary scum off our necks!" "They are always talking about destroying castes and setting up a classless society. Hell! They have made themselves into a privileged caste a thousand times worse than anything we ever had before!"

From a gun-toting but otherwise amiable gentleman of Oaxaca: "The country is going to the dogs! No one does any work these days. Why should he? Only to have his land and labor taken from him. In the old days the Indian had work and enough to eat. He could lay off when he wanted to. The hacendado took care of him and gave him land for his milpa. We used to export grain from Oaxaca; now we have to bring in hundreds of carloads a year. I hope our revolutionaries are satisfied!"

From a banana grower of Vera Cruz: "This country is in a terrible crisis. The Revolution has debauched the workers. Their leaders teach them that they are being exploited if they have to work for a living, and that all they have to do is to reach out and take what they want. Spoil the rich and the foreigner! The people don't know, and the politicians don't care, that at the same time they are destroying Mexico. Expropriation has taken a great deal of land out of production, because the Indian will only work under compulsion. He is now taught that the government will look after him. So, when he is given land, he sits down and does nothing. Don't take my word for it. Look around you. Look at food prices. Beans up from fifteen to forty-five centavos a kilo in five years; rice up from twenty to sixty, and so on. I tell you the whole population is being debauched by these politicians. They can all be bought. I could shoot you at this moment. Your government could send a man to investigate, and I could shoot him. I might have to spend a night in jail, but it would not cost me more than a hundred pesos to go free. The point is that there is no longer any law in Mexico. The law is the whim of the local cacique. I am a Mexican, and it hurts me to have to say such things, but I have seen too much and suffered too much at the hands of these brigands. For it is brigandage to steal the work of a man's hands. It is worse; it is stupidity! You are going to Chiapas. It was once a prosperous coffee country, until they began expropriating the plantations. Watch what happens to coffee production in the next two years. I know, because I have seen it happen in sugar and bananas. I can see that you think I am cowardly and unpatriotic not to do something about it. But I know when I am beaten. I have learned my lesson. I keep my mouth shut and pay up."

A former landowner of Chiapas, now much reduced: "To get to be governor of a state in this country you don't have to know anything about the job. What you do is to gather together all the loafers and good-for-nothings of the state capital, promise them anything, and let them elect you. Naturally, you will have to pay them off, but you can still save something out for yourself. For instance, in the past ten years we have been assessed three times to build a road across this state. To be sure, some of it has been built, enough to connect the capital with the nearest railway junction [about seventy-five miles], but the rest of the state can go hang. Then you make a deal with the gang in Mexico City—a case of you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours—and they will back you up in case anyone makes trouble. It's damnable! Some day, long after I am dead, Mexico may become a great nation, but it will not be until we demand of our politicians some standard of civilized conduct."

Now, a great many of such criticisms are, unfortunately, just, but it does not occur to their makers that they have any responsibility in the matter. The trouble with the ex-privileged, it seems to me, is that they are not willing to fulfill their end of the feudal contract. When the fighting nobles of Spain lost their reason for being through the rise of a strong government, some of the best of them went into the public service and directed the destinies of their country during her most glorious period. I do not say, by any means, that the whites of Mexico are the only ones capable of running the country—history proves the contrary—but they have so many initial advantages that logic demands their participation. If, on the other hand, most of them are content to stand aside and croak in arm-waving impotence, or to wait for a foreign Moses to lead them out of the wilderness, their extinction is only a matter of time.

Back in the fifties a foreign Moses was the hope and the goal of the conservatives. Their native Moses had fled back to the fleshpots of Egypt, and they began to look about for some European prince to establish the "principle of authority" and to relieve them of the responsibility of looking after themselves.

Chapter XXII

TWO INDIANS

The long chapter devoted to Santa Anna was intended to illustrate two major themes, the struggle of the colonial elements for survival against middle-class liberalism and the development of military caciquismo, which in its worst form was santanismo, and which was eventually to triumph with Porfirio Díaz. The monotonous "pronunciamientos" and "plans" which stud the records of half a century were symptomatic of the deep unrest of Mexico. The main lines of cleavage should be apparent by this time, and the reader will be prepared for the final desperate showdown between the clerical-minded conservatives and the revolutionary liberals. It should also be apparent that in the long run the military were the only possible winners. The opening act of the tragedy was the ferocious "Three Years' War" of 1858 to 1861; the principal action was the French intervention and the "empire" of Maximilian, 1862 to 1867; and the dénouement was the military dictatorship of 1876 to 1910. The figures which dominate the scene are two Indians, a middle-class lawyer, Benito Juárez, and a primitive caudillo, Porfirio Díaz.

* * *

Santa Anna galloped out of Mexico City on August 9, 1855. The provisional government of the "Plan of Ayutla" moved in four days later, after the city garrison had duly "pronounced" for it. Meanwhile, the disgusted population of the capital had taken matters into its own hands and "pronounced" with a tumulto. The houses of Santa Anna's ministers were sacked, and the dictator's expensive carriages were burned in a glorious bonfire. It was a strangely purposeful tumulto, organized to show the conservatives that dictatorships were out.

The overthrow of Santa Anna was not accepted by the conservatives as more than a temporary setback. "All hope of reconciliation between the liberal and conservative parties was chimerical," wrote José Vigil, in his *Historia de la Reforma.* "They were separated by an abyss of implacable hatred; the tendencies of both were perfectly defined, and there was no other prospect but a battle to the death between the two political bodies, which, deriving from opposing principles, must necessarily arrive at opposite results."

The years from 1855 to 1867 might appropriately be called the period of the religious wars, for, of all the questions involved, the position of the Church in a liberal republic was the one which admitted of no compromise. The issue was joined. The clerical-minded conservative group could not accept change without destroying itself, while the liberals were just as unyielding in their insistence that the state could not tolerate an institution which denied the principles upon which the state was based. It was natural, therefore, that the liberal party should include all colors of anti-clericalism, from the small *moderato* group, now represented by Ignacio Comonfort, to the violent jacobin *puros* of the extreme left.

Racial and economic issues complicated the picture at the same time. The liberals attracted to their cause ambitious Indians and mestizos, some of whom were high-minded idealists and others military and political leaders thirsting for power. The presence of Indians and half-bloods among the liberals gave the struggle something of the aspect of a race war, although, to be sure, there were Indian generals, such as Méndez and Mejía, and whole Indian tribes, such as the Yaquis, in the ranks of the conservatives. When old General Juan Alvarez, himself an Indian, led his wild barbarians into the capital after the liberal triumph, the nice people thought they were facing another Hidalgo uprising. The economic pattern was complicated by the growing number of foreigners in Mexico–English, Spanish, American, and French merchants, miners, speculators, and the like, who were always quick to threaten the Mexican government with intervention in case they did not receive special treatment.

Juan Alvarez was put in as provisional president, and he soon showed the opposition what to expect by appointing to his cabinet such tried liberals as Melchor Ocampo, Guillermo Prieto, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, and Benito Juárez. The only moderado was Ignacio Comonfort, Minister of War. The first heavy blow dealt by them to the temporal power of the clergy was the "Ley Juárez," passed November 23, 1855, abolishing ecclesiastical courts. The expected storm was so extremely violent that General Alvarez was induced to resign, and Comonfort took his place.

Comonfort has fared hard at the hands of historians. As a moderate, he was suspected by both sides. He made the mistake of trying to be reasonable at a time when reasonableness was out of the question. He put down the "pronunciamientos" against him with unheard-of gentleness and treated his opponents so fairly that a section of the liberal national guard "pronounced" for the restoration of Alvarez. The clergy, on the other hand, were soon disabused of their hope that Comonfort's moderation meant that he was a conservative in disguise, for he strengthened his cabinet by the inclusion of one of the stoutest of all liberals, Don Santos Degollado. The reform program of the "Plan of Ayutla" was carried forward by the drastic "Ley Lerdo," *which prohibited any corporation from holding real property.*

The "Ley Lerdo" was an attempt to kill three birds with one stone. It struck at the economic power of the clergy by forcing religious corporations to sell their lands; it was intended to finance the government by a heavy tax on transfers; and it aimed to create a new class of small proprietors, for the liberals of the day were saturated with laissez-faire doctrine. The authors of the law have been condemned for thus recklessly destroying a considerable part of the economic organization of the country. The religious corporations, with all their faults, were greatly superior to most individual hacendados in efficiency of management, and, most likely, in their treatment of workers. The income from such corporations supported public charities and the schools and colleges of the country. There was no discernible advantage to national economy in turning these vast properties over to irresponsible hacendados and private speculators, and it was clearly an absurdity to suppose that the penniless Indians could buy lands and become small proprietors over night. Whether the liberals considered these matters or not is of no consequence. They were in a war for survival, and they struck where it would hurt.

The clergy and their party were wild with resentment at this attack on "religion." One curious result was that the pious wealthy refused to bid for the expropriated properties, many of which fell into the hands of foreign speculators. Another was the effect upon the Indian *comunidades*, which were also "corporations" within the definition of the law. Their ejidos, which had been inviolable under Spanish law, were made subject to "denunciation," and were bought up at a fraction of their value by caciques, speculators, and hacendados. The restoration of the ejidos is one of the most significant parts of the present (1941) program of the Mexican government. Indian resentment at their "betrayal" by the liberals brought whole tribes into the conservative camp.

The Constituent Congress called by the liberals worked the whole year of 1856, under a heavy bombardment of criticism, and on February 5, 1857, brought out a new constitution. The signing of it was a solemn and moving ceremony. That aged prophet of liberalism, Don Valentín Gómez Farías, was led up to the rostrum on the arms of two deputies and was the first to sign. Then he knelt and swore by the Holy Gospel to recognize and obey the Constitution. The emotion of the Congress overflowed in a tremendous ovation. "We swear! We swear!" The New Dawn.

The Constitution of 1857 seems mild enough at this distance, but the fury with which it was assailed passed anything yet seen. The liberals had learned little since 1824. The new constitution set up a democratic representative government of a single house (since the old Senate had shown marked conservative leanings); it continued the federal system, but attempted to control its abuses by giving the Congress power to depose state executives for cause; it abolished military and clerical immunities (the "Ley Juárez"); it prohibited ownership of land by corporations (the "Ley Lerdo"); it allowed nuns and regular priests to renounce their vows without penalty; it established secular education; and it tacitly recognized freedom of worship by saying nothing about it.

"Pronunciamiento" in Querétaro. "A handful of men without faith, without religion, without principles, possessed by cruelty and vengeance, breathing death and destruction, have put their heavy foot on the neck of the Mexican Nation. They have reversed the order by which societies should be guided, and for more than a year their heavy chains have bound the Fatherland. These impious men would take away our Religion, and their foul lips have blasphemed the name of the Almighty. They have insulted our priests and thrown them in jail . . . ; they have destroyed our temples and turned them to profane uses. These sacrilegious men, full of avarice, have seized the goods of the Church and have reduced her ministers to beggary. What is worse, they have impiously mocked at the excommunications and anathemas of the Church.... They are preparing for the Mexican Nation mourning, blood, devastation, and rapine, and, finally, they will complete our ruin if Divine Providence does not watch over good Mexicans."

Pope Pius IX made the issue very clear. "The Chamber of Deputies, among the many insults it has heaped upon our Most Holy Religion and upon its ministers, as well as upon the Vicar of Christ on Earth, has proposed a new constitution containing many articles, not a few of which conflict with Divine Religion itself, with its salutary doctrines, with its most holy precepts, with its rights.... For the purpose of more easily corrupting manners and propagating the detestable pest of indifferentism and tearing souls away from our Most Holy Religion, it allows the free exercise of all cults and admits the right of pronouncing in public every kind of thought and opinion.... And so that the faithful who reside there may know, and the Catholic world may understand, that We energetically reprove everything that the Mexican Government has done against the Catholic Religion, against its Church, its sacred ministers and pastors, and against its laws, rights, and properties, as well as against the authority of this Holy See, We raise our Pontifical voice in apostolic liberty ... *to condemn, reprove, and declare null and void the said decrees and everything else that the civil authrity has done in scorn of ecclesiastical authority and of this Holy See....*" (Emphasis supplied.)

Bishop Munguía of Michoacán was still more specific. He declared that the faithful could not accept articles: 3 (allowing secular schools); 5 (allowing members of religious orders to renounce their vows); 6 (freedom of speech); 7 (freedom of the press); 9 (freedom of assembly); 12 (abolishing titles and privileges of nobility); 13

(suppressing ecclesiastical courts); 27 (prohibiting corporations from holding land); 36 (defining the duties of the citizen: registration, service in the national guard, right to vote); 39 (popular sovereignty); 72 (power of the Congress to make laws enforcing these articles); 123 (power of federal authority to interfere in matters of worship and discipline). It was evident that the Church would accept no government but one of its own making.

The controversy was soon taken out of the field of argument. By the time the Constitution of 1857 was promulgated a good part of the country was on the march. A conspiracy of nation-wide scope was directed by a secret organization in Mexico City known as the Directorio Conservador. The first serious uprising was at Puebla, which the rebels took and held for several weeks late in 1856. Their leader was Canon Antonio Reyere y Lugo, episcopal governor of the diocese. Reyere called on the people of Puebla to make war by every means on "the enemies of Religion who are attacking the independence and sovereignty of the Church." *Independence and sovereignty.*

Bishop Labastida, writing from exile in Havana, was more discreet, although his meaning was just as clear. "I have been resolved, not only from today, but from the day of my consecration, to suffer any sacrifice, and to undergo, with the grace of God, every trial, rather than violate in the slightest degree my conscience and the solemn vows I have made to God."

It is difficult to imagine the terrible bitterness of the religious war which was already being fought before the constitution was signed. The moderate Comonfort was elected first president of the new regime and took office on December 1, 1857. The only conceivable answer to the liberal program was a military "pronunciamiento," and the garrison at Tacubaya "pronounced" on December 17. The ground had been more carefully prepared this time. The conspirators of the Directorio Conservador convinced

Comonfort himself that the constitution would not work, and he consented to become dictator under the "Plan of Tacubaya." But he changed his mind at the last moment and fled the country, leaving in power the tool of the clerical party, the vain and incompetent General Félix Zuloaga, who found himself faced with the impossible task of running the government with a discredited party and an empty treasury. The liberal government took refuge with Santos Degollado and Melchor Ocampo in Michoacán.

The "Three Years' War" followed the horrible pattern of its predecessors, with sack and arson, the noose and the firing squad teaching "liberalism" and "conservatism" to one side or the other, while fields went unplowed and hunger stalked. On the conservative side were wealth, the Army, the Church, arsenals and supplies, and the machinery of government; on the other, bands of militia under jealous and touchy chieftains, but with the trackless refuge of the back-country behind them, and behind them also the unsmiling figure of one Indian lawyer, Benito Juárez.

One would hardly have picked out Juárez as the man to lead the liberal government through its mortal crisis. He had neither the learning of Melchor Ocampo nor the fire of Santos Degollado. Up to this time he had shown no sign of greatness. Born in a humble Zapotec family of Oaxaca in 1806, he received a conventional education in the provincial schools, where he achieved distinction by his industry alone. He taught school and studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1834. He served as deputy to the liberal state legislature from 1832 to 1834, and was imprisoned in 1836 for suspected participation in the revolt against the conservatives. From 1842 to 1845 he was an official in the treasury of Oaxaca and directed the state finances with honesty and efficiency. He served in the liberal national Congress in 1846 and 1847, until it was dissolved by Santa Anna. Upon his return to Oaxaca he was elected governor of the state, and in that office hung up a record by balancing the budget and leaving a surplus in the treasury, when he retired in 1852. Thus far the career of Juárez had been that of an honest and rather plodding public servant.

Santa Anna's restoration in 1853 brought imprisonment and banishment to Juárez, in revenge for his refusing to allow the dictator to take refuge in Oaxaca after the American War. In New Orleans he met Melchor Ocampo, the clearest mind of the liberal party. It may be, as the debunking Francisco Bulnes affirmed, that Ocampo became Juárez' guide and teacher. However it was, when Juárez returned to Mexico in 1855 he was no longer a country lawyer but a stubborn warrior in the cause of liberalism. He was one of the authors of the Constitution of 1857, although we do not know how much of it was his work.

Benito Juárez had a god whose name was Law. Perhaps it was the effect of the *Pandects* of Justinian, in which he learned that Law is above all persons and above its own makers. Roman law created a god-state, and Juárez accepted it. The liberal constitution was for him a Mexican *Corpus Juris Civilis,* and he was its instrument. Law and the Fatherland. Juárez had the unswerving legalism of a high priest of Israel or a royal visitor of Philip II. In the long and trying years of the civil war it was he alone who never yielded or compromised or deviated from the straight line of Law, as he saw it. *It was Juárez' stubborn conviction of right which held his mercurial party together for ten desperate years.*

Meanwhile, as legal president, after the defection of Comonfort, Juárez took up the gauntlet thrown down by his opponents and published a number of decrees under the constitution which banished all possibility of compromise. He decreed: (1) the complete separation of Church and state; (2) the secularization of all male religious orders; (3) the suppression of all religious corporations; (4) the suppression of novitiates in nunneries; (5) the nationalization of all the real property of the Church; (6) the suppression of tithes.

These decrees were not merely reprisals; they obeyed a statesman-like perspective of the fundamental nature of the conflict—a conflict in which to yield was to be destroyed. They were a body blow to the forces which made unity under the Republic impossible.

The "Three Years' War" dragged out its weary length to exhaustion. Zuloaga as conservative "president" obeyed his masters and annulled all the objectionable legislation, but his notorious incompetence soon got him displaced by the best general among the conservatives, Miguel Miramón. With all their apparent advantages of good leadership and unity, the conservatives were no better off than they had been under Santa Anna. They were even worse off, because the liberals held the port of Vera Cruz, where all foreign goods entered *and paid duties.* Their armies under Miramón, Mejía, and Márquez won most of the engagements, but they could not win the war. The country and the terrain were against them, and in time their enemy learned how to fight. As things looked darker and darker for the conservatives, the army chiefs began to waver in their loyalty and their forces to dwindle. By the end of 1860 they were definitely defeated, and the liberal army, now 28,000 strong, paraded through the capital in triumph on January 1, 1861.

It was only a truce. The liberal government was just as prostrate as its opponents when Juárez went back into the National Palace. Commerce was non-existent, agriculture almost the same; the customs had been pledged up to eighty-five per cent of receipts; the 28,000 officers and men of the army had to be paid; and the income from the tax on the sale of expropriated estates turned out to be much smaller than anticipated, because of the destruction during the war. The monthly deficit of the treasury was 400,000 pesos. To complete the woes of the Juárez government, the dispersed chieftains of the conservative army continued a dozen little wars in various parts of the country. Melchor Ocampo disagreed with Juárez over his policies and retired to his home in Michoacán, where he was seized and shot by General Márquez—the lowest level to which that talented butcher ever descended. Santos Degollado begged for the privilege of avenging the murder of his friend, and was himself caught and shot. The year 1861 was a nightmare. The authority of Juárez was anything but secure, as domestic and foreign critics joined in blaming him for the plight of Mexico. But by some miracle he stood, while the despairing conservatives continued their search for a foreign Moses.

The occasion was propitious. The American Civil War had broken out, and the liberals were left with no strong friend beyond the borders. Napoleon III was deluding himself and his country by pretending that he was as great a man as his uncle and that the manifest destiny of France was to rule the Latin world, including Spanish America. There was an abundance of unemployed princes in Europe, one of whom the Mexican plotters hoped might be induced to take the job of running the country, with Napoleon to back him. Excuses were not wanting for intervention. For many years the civil conflicts had advertised to the world (in the reports of foreign diplomats and investors) that Mexico was a hopelessly barbarous country which needed a Strong Hand. Mexico owed everybody. A mounting heap of private claims, dating from before the "Pastry War," had necessarily been ignored. Juárez recognized debts to the amount of 80,000,000 pesos and pledged his government to pay them, but Mexico's credit was gone, and the great Intervention was agreed upon.

The convention between France, England, and Spain was signed in October, 1861, and was duly blessed by the pope. According to its terms, the signing parties had no designs on the sovereignty of Mexico, but were merely to seize and hold the entry ports until the claims should be satisfied. Napoleon and his Mexican accomplices, however, had other ideas. Unknown to the allies, Archduke Maximilian of Austria had been persuaded to accept the imperial throne of Mexico, and Napoleon guaranteed to make it safe. When the commanders of the British and Spanish forces saw what the game was, they withdrew, leaving the French to embark on the most fantastic adventure of the nineteenth century. A French division landed at Vera Cruz on January 7, 1862.

It is outside the province of this volume to retell the incredible story of Maximilian and his "empire." No episode in recent decades has been more thoroughly exploited. For our purpose it will suffice to name the affair for what it was: a desperate gamble on the part of the dying colonial elements of Mexico to regain their lost advantages by means of a puppet prince whom they hoped to dominate; a cynical grab of territory by Napoleon the Little; and a novelesque adventure by a foolish young man and his power-mad wife, who saw themselves as exponents of Divine Right in the western hemisphere.

And Juárez? From the famous black carriage, in which, unescorted, he governed liberal Mexico for ten years, came not a word about shedding the last drop of his blood for the Fatherland, and the rest. That stone image of an Indian lawyer to the people of Mexico: "To proclaim, as our adversaries do, that they are not making war upon a country, but upon its government, is to repeat the empty declaration of all those who undertake a war of aggression. Besides, it is clear enough that one offends a nation when one attacks the government which that nation has erected and desires to support.... If I were simply a private citizen, or if the authority which I exercise were the result of some shameful mutiny,... then I should not hesitate to sacrifice my position, if in that way I could shield my country from the scourge of war. [But], since that authority is not my patrimony, but a trust confided to me by the nation in order to maintain its independence and honor, I have accepted that trust, and I shall keep it for the period prescribed by our fundamental law, and I shall never yield it to the discretion of a foreign enemy. Rather, I shall wage against [that enemy] the war which the whole nation has accepted, until I oblige him to recognize the justice of our cause."

Thus Benito Juárez, facing destruction by the greatest military power in Europe. It is the driest and most formidable declaration of war I have ever read.

The French had their hands full. Instead of the military parade they had expected, they encountered a savage and desperate resistance. At Puebla, on May 5, 1862, General Laurencez was soundly whipped by the Mexican army of Ignacio Zaragoza. Napoleon had to send more and more troops, until the French had 34,000 regulars in Mexico, without counting the Mexican conservative forces of 20,000 more. The liberals could not hope to stand against such weight, and they retired to their protecting mountains and to the guerrilla warfare they knew so well.

The French commander-in-chief, Marshal Forey, and his successor, Bazaine, had the same experience as Santa Anna and Miramón before them. They chased the liberals from place to place; they shot "bandits" by the score; but they could not win an honest victory. They had, in fact, an impossible assignment. To conquer and occupy a mountainous wilderness three times the size of France would have taken an immensely greater force than the one they had. However, after two years of hard campaigning, the French had cleared out a living space in the middle of the country; the *mission civilisatrice* was declared sufficiently advanced; and Maximilian and Carlotta landed at Vera Cruz on May 28, 1864.

Te Deums, masses, speeches, fireworks. Even so, the frigidity of their reception in that ancient liberal stronghold was so marked that Carlotta burst into tears. Maximilian to his new subjects: "Mexicans! You have asked for me. Your noble nation, by a spontaneous majority, has designated me to watch over your destinies from this day forward!"

Archbishop Labastida, with his eye on the main chance, to the Mexican people: "Let us not forget that we owe this situation of true liberty and well being, and the opportunity to continue the aggrandizement of our country, to the immortal genius of the Emperor of the French, under the government of our beloved son, Maximilian I!"

Giuseppe Garibaldi to the Mexican officers taken prisoner at Puebla: "To the brave officers who fought for Mexican liberty their brother sends a message of friendship and hope!"

General Juan Alvarez to Maximilian and the world at large: "I still live!"

Maximilian and his court paraded about the "pacified" area of the plateau and were everywhere entertained with carefully staged spontaneous fiestas, while the godless French openly scoffed at the barbarians whom they were supposed to be defending from the hosts of Satan. The "bandits" continued to annoy the forces of civilization, unaccountably. The "emperor," puzzled and irritated, finally listened to his advisers and decided that he would have to exterminate the *Juaristas* before there could be peace. "From this day forward the struggle will be between the honest men of the nation and the gangs of criminals and bandits. There will be no more indulgence for those who burn towns, for those who rob, and for those who murder peaceful citizens, poor old folk, and defenseless women!"

Death to all "bandits" taken in arms! Death! But *death to the bandits* also worked both ways.

Everything went wrong for the civilizing mission. Contrary to expectations, the North won the Civil War in the

United States, and Andrew Johnson suggested to the French ambassador that it might be just as well if Bazaine got out of Mexico. Phil Sheridan's army on the Río Grande lent weight to the suggestion. Napoleon's worries at home were sharpened by Prussia's fast and successful wars against Denmark and Austria. France might well be next on the list, and the French people were already talking out loud about their emperor. In Mexico the liberal "bandits" were as far from extermination as ever. So Napoleon submitted to the inevitable and abandoned his dupes.

As soon as the French props were pulled out, the whole gaudy card-house erected by the conservatives fell down. A young Indian general named Porfirio Díaz moved in from the mountains of Oaxaca and took Puebla. Maximilian, weak-minded or quixotic to the last, joined Miramón at Querétaro to face certain destruction, and watched his army being cut to pieces at Cerro de las Campanas. On that same hill himself and his two best generals, Miramón and Mejía, faced a firing squad on June 19, 1867, while all the world shuddered. There were no exceptions in the Law of Juárez.

Death to the bandits? Death?

* * *

The black carriage of Benito Juárez rolled into the capital on the morning of July 15, 1867. General Díaz had spent 20,000 pesos from his scanty funds to decorate the streets for the great event, and the troops were paraded in a glittering array of force, but Juárez sat unsmiling through it all; he knew who the enemy of Law was bound to be. Díaz never forgave him.

Juárez faced the most appalling situation that any president has ever faced, economic and political chaos, but he faced it with stoicism. He meant to weld all classes into a nation, a nation ruled by law. And yet one of his first acts immediately showed how chimerical such an ideal was. He expected the 60,000 soldiers of the Republic to share his Spartan devotion to the Fatherland, *and he dismissed 40,000 of them.*

The furious chieftains, each of whom commanded a personal army, had the psychology of the conquistador. Had they not saved the Fatherland from the foreigner? Was this their reward for ten years of blood and suffering? To be turned out like beggars in the country which was theirs by right of conquest? The answer of some was to organize a violent opposition, called the *constitucionalistas*, which denounced Juárez as a dictator and called for the election of Porfirio Díaz. A good many did not wait for elections, but went back to their old trade of "pronouncing" and marauding.

Nevertheless, in the election of October, 1867, Juárez was elected by a substantial majority, possibly, as his enemies charged, by controlling the election machinery. But his party was divided by jealousy and intrigue; the country was overrun by gangs of bandits and ex-soldiers, imperialist and republican; Indian tribes of the northwest were in open revolt; the people were hungry. To make matters worse, a terrible drought ruined the crops of 1869 and Juárez could do nothing about relieving the famine. Nevertheless, his loyal forces, under that prodigy of drunkenness and energy, General Sostenes Rocha, smashed disaffected caudillos one after the other; General Díaz retired to plot and manufacture munitions in Oaxaca; and in a year or two there seemed to be some prospect that the government would endure. That it could survive at all in the face of such universal misery, military opposition, and the old enemies of liberalism, showed that Juárez had with him a heavy majority of the population.

With his admirable pertinacity, the old Indian applied himself to the slow task of rebuilding his country, according to the blueprint of 1857. The eternal financial crisis was partly solved by the honest and efficient Minister of the Treasury, Don Matías Romero. Industry was encouraged; the building of the Vera Cruz railroad, begun in 1850, was resumed; the voracity of local caciques was somewhat controlled; secular schools were opened. Juárez intended to unify the country in fact, and he pursued a policy of conciliation toward the late enemies of the Republic. In 1870 he passed a general amnesty bill, which restored all but a few of the ex-imperialists to freedom and citizenship, while he mollified the Indians by quietly discouraging further alienation of the ejidos. The blessings of comparative peace brought a belated flowering of letters. Men like the liberal Ignacio Altamirano and the conservative José María Roa Bárcena wrote novels and verses of some merit, and, much more important, they wrote without fear. In the field of scholarship, distinguished figures like Manuel Orozco y Berra and José Fernando Ramírez contributed works of lasting value in the history of their country. There seemed to be some truth in the statement of Don Justo Sierra, that the Intervention and the Empire had made Mexico a nation.

The first great test came with the presidential elections of 1871. Of the three candidates (Juárez, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, and Porfirio Díaz), none received a majority, and the election was thrown into the Congress. Juárez, who had received a plurality, was declared president. "Pronunciamiento" by Porfirio Díaz. The election was illegal! His "plan": "The Constitution of 1857 and freedom of elections!" To arms! Again Díaz and his confederates were smashed by General Rocha, but it would have taken no prophet to foretell the fate of Mexico when Juárez should be no more. And Benito Juárez, the stern patriot, the Man of Law, the symbol of a Mexico still lost in the distant future, died on July 18, 1872.

His successor, Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada, was a vigorous and intelligent man, but he lacked something, and I suspect that it was the symbolic value of Juárez. Juárez the Indian.

Juárez the unsmiling apostle of Law and Justice. Who but Juárez could have gone unguarded through the back country for ten years, alone in his battered black carriage, trusting to the exquisite courtesy of his own people? Lerdo continued the policy of his late chief, and even succeeded in appeasing most of the caudillos who had "pronounced" for Díaz—all but Díaz himself, who escaped into exile, after a series of novelesque adventures. Lerdo introduced the Iron Age into Mexico with the opening of the Vera Cruz railroad in 1873. But he pleased no faction. The *Lerdistas*, the *Juaristas*, and the *Porfiristas* all felt cheated, because Lerdo gave the country to none of them. He kept himself in power by the only means possible, by trickery, fraud, and arbitrary interference with the "rights" of local caudillos. He was denounced as a dictator and the destroyer of liberty.

Porfirio Díaz slipped back into the country in 1875. His old army friends took heart. "Pronunciamientos" against the intolerable tyranny of Lerdo. The "Plan of Tuxtepec," a hodge-podge of protests, meaning that the military chieftains considered Mexico their prey and that they would not be balked. "Pronunciamientos" from Yucatan to the United States border. The loyal Sostenes Rocha fought a bitter and losing war for a long year, but in the end he and his chief were beaten. Lerdo fled the country on November 21, 1876.

Juárez and his Law had been rejected in favor of a rule by force, and the astonished conservatives suddenly found themselves presented with a dictator, gratis. For the next thirty-four years they were to enjoy the most efficient despotism ever seen in this hemisphere. "Bread and the Club." Bread for the Army, bread for the bureaucrats, bread for the foreigners, even bread for the Church; and the club for the common people of Mexico—the system of Don Porfirio.

It is tempting to devote a good deal of space to the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz; it was recent, and it still represents the heaven-on-earth of a considerable section of Mexican society and the whitehaired gentlemen who haunt the American Club. But our time is growing short, and in the scope of this volume the reign of Díaz is no more than the inevitable last act of the tragedy which began with the mutiny of Agustín de Iturbide. (For a searching account of the dictatorship of Díaz the reader is referred to the biography by Carleton Beals, *Porfirio Díaz, Dictator of Mexico*.)

Porfirio Díaz had the virtues of a great barbarian, and he needed them. The barbarians who had elevated him had to be kept quiet, and they had to be kept harmless. The new master of Mexico had the cunning of a Caesar Borgia. He gave his generals little jobs and a great deal of money; he kept them apart and played them off against each other; he split the Army up into a number of small units; he restored it to its rightful place at the public trough; but he did not trust it. For his immediate use in terrorizing dissenters he organized a private army of thugs, whom he called his *bravi*. These could be counted on to wreck newspapers and commit whatever crimes were necessary. The police, of course, were never able to track down the criminals. The nation itself was suffering from its usual disease of banditry. Díaz' solution was to organize a national gendarmerie called the Rurales, recruited from the gunmen of the cities and the bandits of the mountains. Into their capable hands was put the task of making Mexico safe for Don Porfirio and his friends. They were given showy uniforms, good salaries, and the power to shoot on sight, and no questions asked. Troublesome Indian caciques, striking workmen, indiscreet speakers, and legitimate bandits disappeared into the dungeons of the fearful old Belén Penitentiary, or were shot "while attempting to escape"—the *Ley Fuga*. In the course of a few years Mexico became the best policed country in the world. It was ruled by martial law, and the Rurales loved to shoot.

As the years rolled by and Mexico lay quiet in her strait-jacket, foreign capital was encouraged to come in; manufactures and agriculture flourished; railroads pushed their way south from the border; American miners revived the ancient *reales de minas* of the Spaniards, introduced new methods, and smelters began to belch their yellow fumes into the desert air; silver, gold, copper, lead, and zinc flowed north to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding commerce and industry of the United States; and coffee, sugar, bananas, and henequen found a ready market abroad. Mexico was solvent!

Like Santa Anna, Don Porfirio had to have appropriate monuments to his immortality. The capital was cleaned up and modernized; electric lights blinked and streetcars clanged; and a rash of marble palaces broke out, the most hideous example of which is the bastard Palace of Fine Arts.

For the Creole aristocracy the dictatorship meant the return of the Silver Age. The hacienda reverted to the pure type of the feudal estate, with the terrible Rurales to call on in case of trouble. Fine carriages drawn by high-stepping horses again paraded up and down the Paseo on Sundays, but the crowds of léperos and country Indians which had offended good taste in the days of Thomas Gage and Fanny Calderón were now kept out of sight by Don Porfirio's Rurales. The ladies discarded the mantilla and the fan for the *dernier cri* from Paris; their sons were sent to France for an education and came back pattering the lingo of the *boulevardier* and scoffing at the barbarism of their own country. The best people went in for building houses in the villainous style of the Second Empire. I was shown through one of them by its proud owner, now reduced to taking in boarders. It was a museum-piece of velvet draperies, pier-glasses, marble, gilt, chandeliers, spindly chairs, artificial flowers, and stuffed birds. "Isn't it beautiful!" she exclaimed. "They don't build houses like this any more. *There is nothing Mexican in it!*" This good lady belonged to the class of which Charles Flandrau makes such kindly fun in his delightful *Viva Mexico!* Their ready hospitality, their reckless good living, and charming manners were one of the pleasantest features of Mexican life. Happy days were here again, and Don Porfirio would live forever.

The clergy awoke from their long nightmare and discovered that religion and the liberal dictatorship of Don Porfirio were not necessarily incompatible. The offensive laws of Juárez' day were discreetly ignored; religious schools and thinly disguised nunneries appeared; and in case of trouble the pious Doña Carmen Díaz could patch things up with Don Porfirio, who was an indulgent husband. The ranks of the clergy were swelled by Spanish, French, and Italian priests, until, by the end of the régime, they numbered some five thousand, as against the pitiful five hundred of the dark days of Juárez. Only the native clergy grumbled.

If the dictatorship of Díaz meant the return of the Silver Age for the Creoles and the clergy, for the foreigner it was the Golden Age. Mexico became "the mother of foreigners and the stepmother of Mexicans." The foreigner soon learned that he could buy justice and favors from the swollen and underpaid bureaucracy, which grew to include a very large percentage of the literate population of the country. *Empleomanía,* the government-job-mania, infected the whole middle class of Mexico. But the foreigner was king, for the new paradise was made possible by his money and industry, with the sweat of Mexican workmen. His factories and mines and plantations were rarely disturbed by strikes and such-like unpleasantness, and, when they were, the Rurales, the Army, and the judiciary saw to it that the malcontents gave no more trouble. Strikers were slaughtered by the score and by the hundred at Cananea and Río Blanco, while the slaves of the henequen plantations of Yucatan and the tobacco plantations of the Valle Nacional were beaten to a bloody pulp for real or suspected intransigence. Díaz made Mexico a colony of foreign capitalism, principally American. His dictatorship was a byproduct of the post-Civil-War boom, of our industrial revolution, and it began to fold up with the panic of 1907.

An interesting phenomenon of the dictatorship was the change which took place in Don Porfirio himself. The illiterate guerrillero who had fought the French to a standstill in the mountains of Oaxaca underwent a subtle metamorphosis. At fifty-one he married Doña Carmen, a beautiful young girl from a distinguished Creole family. He began to turn white; he dressed like a European banker; his wife taught him table manners. As his régime took on an air of permanence and his machine functioned more and more perfectly, he found himself surrounded by a crowd of place-seekers and yes-men. His claque poured out an ever-thickening stream of flattery, and he liked it. If one applies flattery to royalty with a trowel, on Don Porfirio one used a hose. He was loaded with foreign decorations and listened to speeches which would have upset the stomach of a Santa Anna, but none of them touched the speech of our own Elihu Root in 1907.

"If I were a poet I should write eulogies; if I were a musician I should compose triumphal marches; if I were a Mexican I should feel that the steadfast loyalty of a lifetime would not be too much to give in return for the blessings that he has brought to my country. But as I am neither poet, musician, nor Mexican, but only an American who loves justice and liberty, and hopes to see their reign among mankind progress and strengthen and become perpetual, I look to Porfirio Díaz, the President of Mexico, as one of the great men to be held up for the hero-worship of mankind!"

I am familiar with the "yes-but" arguments regarding the material advancement of Mexico under Díaz: so many miles of railroads; so many millions invested in this and that; so many years of peace and order; 80,000,000 pesos in the treasury. I have even read that Díaz was the best type of benevolent despot. But all that I can concede to the apologists is that some sort of military despotism was very likely inevitable, and that, if Díaz had not taken over, Mexico would probably have been torn to pieces by the rival caudillos whom he so effectively checkmated.

Otherwise, the Pax Porfiriana was a calamity. It threw Mexico back into an irresponsible autocracy, without the Laws of the Indies or the salutary fear of a royal visitor to curb it. There was no law but the will of Díaz, and Díaz was a shallow opportunist. The legislature became a mockery, kept to lend the color of legality to his acts. The dictator cynically referred to his law-makers as *mi caballada*—"my herd of horses." Elections were such a farce that hardly anybody took the trouble to vote. The bureaucracy and the judiciary were utterly corrupt. Between 1883 and 1894, by a series of "colonizing" laws passed by his *caballada*, Díaz gave away, to foreign speculators and personal friends, 134,500,000 acres of the public domain, or *about one fifth of the entire area of the Republic*. Not satisfied with this colossal rape, the land sharks prevailed upon Díaz to throw open for seizure and settlement the remaining lands of the Indian communities. When the Indians objected, as did the Maya and the Yaqui, the Army and the Rurales put down the "rebellions," and thousands of prisoners were sold into the slave gangs of Yucatan and the Valle Nacional. *By the end of the Díaz régime not ten per cent of the Indian communities had any land whatever*. In the long history of human greed there are few chapters more dismal than this. The reign of Díaz was, in short, the denial of elementary justice, and that tragedy cannot be paid for by a spurious material "progress," however glittering.

One of the curious things about the dictatorship of Díaz was that its beneficiaries evidently thought it would never end. It did not occur to them that all the nauseating flattery and wishful thinking in the world could not prolong his days by so much as a minute. Toward the last his feline brain began to thicken, and his trigger finger lost its cunning. A handful of revolutionary thinkers, such as Felipe Carrillo Puerto and the Flores Magón brothers, preached socialist and anarchist doctrines, wrote pamphlets and edited newspapers, and faced death, prison, torture, and exile, but their work went on. In 1908 a mild little man named Francisco Madero published a book entitled *La Sucesión Presidencial en 1910*, in which he brought up the forbidden subject of Díaz' successor. What! Could Don Porfirio die? A year later Andrés Molina Enríquez wrote a shocking book, *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales*, which somehow got by the censor, although it was suppressed eventually. Molina's book was a terrifying exposure of the whole hypocritical, stifling miasma of despotism—Porfirian despotism. Books, to be sure, would not have caused anyone's downfall, because most of the reading public was safely tied to government jobs, but they might profitably have been read by the elect and the foreigners, whose heads were thrust deep in the sand.

1910. The year of the Great Centennial, the triumph of progress and *porfirismo*, and the hundredth anniversary of Father Hidalgo's *Grito de Dolores*. The irony was almost too heavy to be ignored, but it was ignored. Like a plant whose roots have been cut off, the Golden Age of Don Porfirio threw out its last spray of blossoms with the Centennial, and died. It ended as it had begun, in blood. By a coincidence, 1910 was also the centennial of the massacres at the Alhóndiga.

Chapter XXIII

THIS STRANGE, EVENTFUL HISTORY

"THINKERS," MUTTERED THE major absently, "prepare the Revolution; bandits carry it out. At the moment no one can say with any assurance: 'So-and-So is a revolutionary and What's-his-Name is a bandit.' Tomorrow, perhaps, it will be clearer."

"Nonsense," interrupted the doctor. "It's a problem in elementary arithmetic. Let us suppose that we wish to discover the equivalent value *x* of a certain hero named So-and-So. Let us also suppose that before the Revolution *x* equalled zero pesos. After the Revolution, let us say, *x* equals a hundred thousand pesos. But, since So-and-So could not have acquired a single peso without taking it from some one else, by cancellation we arrive at the result: *x* equals a bandit!" (From Mariano Azuela's novel, *Las Moscas*.)

The fall of the Díaz regime was as inevitable as it was unprepared. Up to 1908 all suggestions that it could fall were rigorously suppressed, and their authors expiated their temerity in exile, prison, or death. But in 1908 the aged dictator gave an interview to an American newspaperman, James Creelman, published in *Pearson's Magazine* under the title, "Thrilling Story of President Díaz, the Greatest Man on the Continent." The greatest man on the continent had told Creelman that the Mexican people were now ready for democracy and that he intended to retire in 1910. Díaz meant the story for the people across the border, but it was soon circulating wildly among politicians and intellectuals. The news was too good to be true, for the truth was that the younger generation was bored with its doddering dictator and his senile government. Not a few were concerned with the fate of the country when Díaz should retire, and several offered themselves as potential saviors of the Fatherland.

The man who capitalized on the situation was Francisco Madero, whose book has been mentioned. Madero was not a revolutionist; indeed, a more unlikely leader of a revolution could hardly be imagined. He came from a large and rapacious family of land-owners in Coahuila; he was a kindly man with no particular training for anything; following the *mores* of his class, he had spent part of his youth in Paris and had undergone a semester's residence at the University of California. His diminutive size (five feet two), squeaky voice, and lack of biceps had given him an inferiority complex, for which he compensated by going in for Messianic oddities—prohibition, vegetarianism, and spiritualism. In one of his séances his Ouija board told him that he was to be president of Mexico, and the Creelman article told him the time was at hand. His first step was to publish his book, which had nothing remarkable about it, being a few mild suggestions to the effect that it might be a good idea to restore the Constitution of 1857 and to give the people a chance to pick a *vice-president*. That vice-president could easily be Panchito Madero, and Díaz might die. Stranger things had happened.

President Díaz was good-natured about the competition offered by his odd opponent and allowed him to travel about the country haranguing audiences, but to his astonishment Madero was everywhere received by enthusiastic crowds. Madero invented a slogan which caught on: "Effective Suffrage—No Re-election." It did not mean much, but it was something—at least a protest against the interminable dictatorship of Don Porfirio. Madero's success was so sensational that Díaz became alarmed and threw him in jail in San Luis Potosí. Various other candidates were discouraged from campaigning too strenuously, and Díaz and his stooge, Ramón Corral, were "elected" on September 30, 1910.

Meanwhile, on September 16, the Great Centennial was celebrated, with 20,000,000 pesos' worth of fireworks, decorations, military parades, banquets, speeches, poems, and carloads of champagne.

While under arrest at San Luis Potosí, Madero wrote his famous "Plan of San Luis Potosí." After the election, he escaped across the border to San Antonio and there "pronounced" in heroic style. Nobody seemed to pay much attention to him, and, after a laughable fiasco, he gave his revolution up as a bad job and set out for Europe. Meanwhile, down Chihuahua way, a rude storekeeper named Pascual Orozco and a gorilla-like bandit whom he had befriended decided to stage a revolution of their own. The bandit was one Doroteo Arango, better known to history as Francisco Villa. At the news of the uprising, Madero abandoned his European trip, hastened back to Chihuahua, and persuaded Orozco and Villa to let him lead their revolution. He had a party at last, and an army. February, 1911.

Other prospective saviors had taken up arms. Abraham González gathered together a band of cowboys and went on the warpath in northern Chihuahua. Down in the state of Morelos a little fighting-cock of a man named Emiliano Zapata was exciting the Indians by telling them to take the land and hold it by arms, because they would never get it otherwise. *Land and Liberty, and Death to the Hacendados!*

Even in Mexico City strange things were happening. The *caballada* committed the unheard-of lèse-majesté of calling for the dictator's resignation. Crowds of *Maderistas* took to parading before the National Palace. Díaz frantically wired his Minister of the Treasury, José Limantour, to come back from France and help him out. Limantour stopped in New York, where he had conferences with Madero's agents. Demands and counter-demands. Finally, in April, an armistice was agreed upon. But the troops of Villa and Orozco were already besieging Ciudad Juárez, across from El Paso, and they pushed Madero aside and took it by storm, May 10, 1911. All the world could now see how rotten the Federal Army was, and tumultos broke out with increasing frequency. The situation of Díaz was hopeless. Limantour accepted defeat and agreed to the resignation of Díaz. A provisional government would be set up, under Francisco de la Barra, until Madero should take over. Díaz had not been consulted.

May 23, 1911. The news broke in Mexico City. On the twenty-fourth huge crowds paraded through the streets down to the Zócalo. *Resign! Resign!* Riotous scenes in the Congress. *Resign! Resign!* Mobs milling before the National Palace. *Resign! Resign!* The dictator answered: "Fire!" Two hundred dead.

May 24, 1911. Midnight. Porfirio Díaz, suffering from a raging toothache and self-righteous to the last, sent his resignation to the Congress. Deathlike silence. The *caballada* was free.

Francisco Madero, surrounded by a cloud of relatives, hastened down from the north and was cheered by delirious crowds. The savior of the Fatherland had greatness thrust upon him. True to his promise of San Luis Potosí, Madero called for national elections in October. The halo had not yet become tarnished, and he was virtually the unanimous choice of the electors.

Madero ruled with sweetness and light and brotherly love—the Constitution of 1857, free speech, free press, right of assembly. But behind him was a gang of self-seeking politicians, headed by members of his own family. The real power of the Madero administration was in the hands of Brother Gustavo, who was tough and hardboiled. He organized a small army of gangsters whom he called his *porra*, modeled after Díaz' *bravi* and used for the same purposes. Other relatives lined up at the public trough. Mexico was soon suffering from as corrupt and expensive a régime as that of Díaz, without its stability. The "Plan of San Luis Potosí" had said something about restoring Indian lands, but now the subject was dropped. Zapata, disillusioned with the little white man, whom he had never trusted anyway, again called his people to arms and resumed the burning of haciendas. Free speech had the disquieting effect of allowing the discussion of explosive revolutionary doctrine. An able young lawyer named Luis Cabrera, who had read his Henry George, brought forward a wicked plan to break up the swollen estates by taxing idle lands. The weak toleration of such heresy showed beyond a doubt that Madero was a dangerous lunatic. The word was passed around that Madero must go.

1912. The first to "pronounce" was Madero's early backer, Pascual Orozco. He was premature. After one expedition against him had failed, Madero gave the job to General Victoriano Huerta, although he hesitated because of Huerta's addiction to alcohol. Huerta was a murderous drunkard, but he was a good soldier, and Orozco fled across the border. Then Madero showed his ignorance of Mexican history. He asked Huerta to account for the million pesos given him to carry on the campaign. Huerta indignantly refused, and was retired in more or less disgrace. Two other military revolts, by Bernardo Reyes and Félix Díaz, were put down without much trouble, and Madero committed his second major error: *he did not shoot his prisoners.*

During 1912 Madero did other tactless things, such as neglecting to continue Díaz' policy of protecting foreigners and their property. Zapata and lesser caudillos committed outrages, and Madero was unable to stop them. The country had to be saved, and, at two o'clock on a Sunday morning, February 9, 1913, the garrison of Tacubaya marched to the prison where Bernardo Reyes was confined. Then, with General Reyes at their head, they marched to the National Palace. Meanwhile, Brother Gustavo had got wind of the uprising and dashed to the Palace ahead of the conspirators. There he persuaded the guard not to desert the president, so that, when Reyes and his men approached the gates, they were met by a burst of machine-gun fire, which killed Reyes and two hundred civilians on their way to Mass. Then it was that Madero embraced his fate; he put Victoriano Huerta, the drunken maniac whom he had insulted, in charge of the Palace troops.

Then followed, from February 9 to February 18, the "Tragic Ten Days," which did not shake the world. Huerta, from the Palace and Félix Díaz, from the Citadel, cynically sprayed Mexico City with shells, killing and maiming civilians, but never by any chance hitting each other. Felipe Angeles, the best and most honorable soldier of the Republic, hastened back from Morelos to protect Madero, but found himself blocked by our ambassador, Henry Lane Wilson, who objected to having guns placed in the same block with the Embassy. Wilson had been an active member of the conspiracy to destroy Madero. The horrible farce continued by Huerta's sacrificing a company of loyal Rurales to the machine-guns of Félix Díaz, just to prove that the show was on the level. The inevitable dénouement was of a piece with the rest of the business. Madero and his cabinet were arrested by officers of his guard, while Huerta was unaccountably absent; Gustavo Madero was delivered to the soldiers of the Citadel and tortured to death.

February 18, 1913. Félix Díaz, Huerta, and Henry Lane Wilson drew up, in the American Embassy, the "Compact of the Citadel," which was a "plan" to reconstruct the Mexican government along safe and sane lines. Wilson to the diplomatic corps: "Mexico has been saved!

From now on we shall have peace, progress, and prosperity!" Wilson to the State Department at Washington: "A wicked despotism has fallen!" Joel Poinsett was an amateur meddler.

February 22, 1913. Midnight. Francisco Madero and Pino Suárez, the vice-president, were shot "while attempting to escape."

Victoriano Huerta had saved the Fatherland. His victory was celebrated with feasting and merry-making; the good old days were back again, and prosperity was around the corner. Huerta, however, turned out to be unmanageable; his seventeen months as president were an unbroken orgy of drunkenness, robbery, and murder. The cabinet which Ambassador Wilson and the diplomatic corps had picked out for him included some of the best men among the conservatives, but they soon resigned in disgust, and Huerta ruled Mexico with his personal gang of assassins. Critics of Mexico's Nero were quietly murdered; Congressman Belisario Domínguez denounced Huerta for a bloody tyrant and accurately prophesied his own death. A hundred and ten dissenters in the Congress were jailed; only members of the Catholic Party remained, and they had to do what they were told. Popular revulsion against the shame of Victoriano Huerta was the real beginning of the Revolution.

Venustiano Carranza, bewhiskered conservative governor of Chihuahua, honestly horrified at the murder of Madero, and interested in his own political future, "pronounced" against the usurper. His "Plan of Guadalupe" was pure *maderismo*—overthrow of the dictator and restoration of the Constitution of 1857. There were already three respectable forces in the north, those of Francisco Villa, Pablo González ("the general who never won a battle"), and, off in Sonora, that of the man who was to become the leader of the Revolution, Alvaro Obregón. Carranza was named "First Chief of the Revolution." Properly distrusting the two Chihuahua chieftains, he trekked across the wild mountains of the Sierra Madre Occidental and joined Obregón.

The Revolution began its southward sweep; it became a conquest of Mexico by the men of the north. It had no ideology but the vague program of Carranza—the destruction of plutocracy, praetorianism, and clericalism. For the present its job was to conquer Mexico. Obregón's terrifying Yaqui troops and Villa's equally ferocious cavalry, his famous *dorados*, had a glorious orgy of killing and looting. *Death to the federals! Death to the hacendados!* Cities, towns, and haciendas were stripped bare, and prisoners were always shot. It was simpler that way, and much more fun. Villa and his two bloodthirsty cronies, Tomás Urbina and Rodolfo Fierro, were childishly vain of their marksmanship, and there was an abundance of targets.

Alvaro Obregón was the one leader of the north who sensed the vital issues beneath the great tumulto. He had witnessed the enslavement of the Yaqui and the seizure of their lands. His own life as a mechanic and farmer made him familiar with the problems of the Mexican worker. He turned out to be a born caudillo and the most popular and successful general of the Revolution. Above all, he was intelligent, practical, and hard-minded; revolutionary theories were not a religion but could be trimmed to fit the occasion. He accepted the "First Chief," but he meant to rule himself.

Meanwhile, down in the old liberal haunts of Morelos and Guerrero, Zapata's agrarian movement, the "Plan of Ayala," was given form by Díaz Soto y Gama, with a program which aimed at nothing short of a complete restoration of land to the Indians. Huerta's army, half of which existed only on paper, was no match for the wild men of Zapata, while his garrisons in the north melted before the fire of Villa and Obregón.

Huerta was doomed by another and unforeseen event.

Up in the United States an ex-college professor and a sort of Presbyterian dominie was elected president. Woodrow Wilson looked upon Huerta's murderous record and was not pleased. He recalled the meddling Henry Lane Wilson and sent down a personal envoy, John Lind, to investigate and persuade Huerta to be civilized. Lind got nowhere, and Wilson decided that Huerta would have to go. The border was opened for the shipment of arms to Villa and Obregón—arms which were paid for by tens of thousands of head of cattle stolen from the vast empire of the Terrazas family. Even so, Huerta was almost saved by the unintelligent act of our Admiral Mayo. Some American sailors loading gasoline at Tampico were arrested and held in jail for an hour or so. They were released with apologies by the Mexican commandant, but Admiral Mayo was not satisfied. The United States flag had been insulted, and only a salute of twenty-one guns could wipe out the stain. The commandant refused; the delighted Huerta refused; he would protect the Fatherland against the northern bully. The silly business got beyond reasonable solution. President Wilson, puzzled by the conflicting reports and indignant at Huerta's bombast—which was meant for Mexican consumption—ordered the occupation of Vera Cruz. The dead: two hundred Mexican soldiers; twenty-one American marines. Tremendous indignation throughout Mexico. Carranza, stirred in his patriotism, and afraid that Huerta would steal a march on him, denounced the occupation as a violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—which it was—and came in for a share of the glory of saving the Fatherland.

Huerta's last hour had struck, however, at the moment when our government threw its weight behind the constitutionalists. The armies of Obregón and Villa raced south, with Mexico City as the prize. Carranza managed to hold Villa at Zaçatecas, and Obregón entered the capital on August 10, 1914. Huerta fled the country and drank himself to death in peace.

Pancho Villa broke openly with Carranza after his "betrayal." The frustrated ex-bandit had a curious history for the next year or so. Obregón persuaded him to leave the whole matter of the government in the hands of a convention, which met in Aguas Calientes in October, 1914. But Aguas Calientes was in Villa's territory, and, when it met, the delegates discovered that Villa was boss. Their provisional president, Eulalio Gutiérrez, was virtually a prisoner of Villa. Obregón wisely went over to Carranza, while Villa moved his *convencionista* army on the capital. Villa had come to an understanding with Zapata, and the two guerrilleros rode into the promised land side by side, while well-dressed people shuddered prophetically behind barred doors. The difference in the conduct of the armies of the two chieftains was the difference between men of principle and bandits. Zapata's men humbly begged for bread at the doors of the rich; Villa and his gang went on a glorious spree of drunkenness, rape, and murder.

Gutiérrez stood it as long as his stomach held out, but soon made his escape to Carranza in Vera Cruz. When Villa and his army were thoroughly demoralized by drink and venery, Obregón struck. The convencionistas retreated to Celaya, where, in April, 1915, occurred the most terrible battle in Mexican history. Primitive fury, however, was no match for the cool brain of Obregón, and after three bloody days Villa retreated northward in his long trains of freight cars, pulling up the track behind him. Obregón laid track and squeezed Villa relentlessly month after month, until Villa was driven to gamble everything on a last desperate raid across the western mountains to Agua Prieta, which was held by a hard-faced mestizo named Plutarco Elías Calles. There Pancho Villa's wild cavalrymen left their bodies hanging on the barbed wire, and, after five years in the sun, their chief found himself back at his starting point, banditry.

In the course of the bitter civil war, the support given to Huerta by the clergy, as well as the ancient tradition of Mexican liberalism, had given the Revolution a violently anti-clerical trend. Obregón demanded a "loan" from the clergy, and was refused. By way of retaliation, he drafted a number of priests into his army. Religion was being attacked! The strong interventionist sentiment in the United States was heightened by the agitation of the Catholics, who had no notion of the history of the Church in Mexico. Great pressure was put on President Wilson, but, fortunately for us, Wilson contented himself with writing a series of his famous notes, which did no particular harm beyond infuriating the Mexicans.

In spite of Carranza's pigheadedness, he had to accept our aid. Wilson cut off Villa's supply of arms in October, 1915. Villa retaliated by stopping a train at Santa Ysabel, Chihuahua, and shooting sixteen American engineers. In March, 1916, he led a raid across the border and killed sixteen more Americans at Columbus, New Mexico. All of this may have been pure vendetta, or it may have obeyed a primitive statesmanship, because it was almost bound to end in intervention. The distracted Wilson could think of nothing better to do than to send Pershing down to catch Villa. He did not know his geography, or the Mexican people. Pancho Villa became a hero.

1916. Although Villa and Zapata were still marauding, the rule of Carranza showed some promise of stability. His greatest problem was the five-hundred-odd new "generals" and caudillos who had risen with the Revolution and who ruled their satrapies quite independently of the "First Chief." They made and applied their "laws" as they saw fit, and most of them carried on a system of more or less legalized thievery, blackmail, and extortion. Carranza gained friends among the conservatives, however, by repudiating the radical implications of the Revolution and its leaders. He would take neither advice nor criticism from them; his best men, including Obregón, left him in disgust, and Mexico suffered one of the most corrupt régimes in her tragic history.

The constitutional convention which Carranza called at Querétaro in December, 1916, got out of his hands. It was dominated by men who refused to be cheated, Francisco Múgica and Alvaro Obregón. A new constitution was thrown together *in six weeks*. In reality the Constitution of 1917 must be considered a "plan," imposed upon the country by the victorious men of the north. It was a weapon forged to insure the success of the Revolution. To a very great extent it was an amplification of the Constitution of 1857, but it contained several articles that departed radically from laissez-faire liberalism. Of these the two which contained nitroglycerine were articles 27 and 123. Article 27 rationalized the xenophobia of the Revolution by denying the principle of land-ownership in fee simple; land could be restored to the peasants on the principle of eminent domain; all subsoil deposits, including petroleum, belonged to the nation, and could be exploited only by Mexican citizens and corporations, or by foreigners who agreed to subject themselves to Mexican law. Article 123 was the Magna Charta of labor; it recognized the workman's right to strike, organize, bargain collectively, receive adequate compensation, sick benefits, and the like. A third article, Article 3, put teeth into the anticlerical provisions of 1857; it was a declaration of independence from the clergy; all education was to be secular and compulsory. The Constitution of 1917 was, in short, the blueprint of a modern industrial and agrarian republic, with leanings toward socialism. Its natural enemies were, of course, the same whom we have met all along the line since 1824.

For three years the constitution hardly emerged from the blueprint stage. Carranza was not interested in agrarian and labor reforms. The National Agrarian Commission, which his government set up in January, 1916, distributed only half a million acres of land in three years. The practice of employers in the Federal District of paying their workmen in worthless Carranza scrip caused a general strike, which Carranza put down with the military. The new labor center, the Casa del Obrero Mundial, was closed, and its leaders were thrown in jail. Carranza's reluctance to apply Article 27 to the restoration of Indian lands kept Zapata in rebellion, until that extraordinary chieftain was murdered in as nauseating a piece of treachery as has ever been recorded. Carranza tried to quiet labor by allowing it to hold a convention at Saltillo in May, 1918, but he was outplayed by a young leader named Luis G. Morones, who organized the first nation-wide union, the *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana*, better known as the CROM. At the same time Morones set up a political engine, the Mexican Labor Party.

Carranza's dull and reactionary term plodded to its close. Since he was pledged to the principle of "no re-election," he could not gracefully succeed himself. But he loved power, and was unintelligent enough to try to force the election of one Ignacio Bonillas, who was not even identified with the Revolution. Obregón, the conqueror of Huerta and the leader of the Revolution, was obviously the only possible choice of the nation. He made his escape from the capital in disguise, with the help of Morones, and "pronounced," in April, 1920. The nation, heartily sick of mediocrity and corruption, made his march to Mexico City a parade, while Carranza was murdered in bed by one of his own officers, during his flight.

An ex-music teacher, Adolfo de la Huerta, was put in as provisional president, but it goes without saying that Obregón was duly "elected." Mexico had a new master, one who knew what he was about and who would stand for no nonsense. Obregón meant to restore peace and economic security, and he made the Revolution respectable. Everyone became a Revolutionary with a capital "R"—ancient Díaz bureaucrats, ex-Huerta generals, and shoals of new caudillos—all were absorbed into the Obregón System. A new jargon came into being; one talked "revolutionarily well," or one acted in a "revolutionary manner"—meaning that one stood in with the Boss.

A great deal of nonsense was talked at the time about Mexico's "going Bolshevist," because the Revolution incorporated catch-words current among left-wing circles of the day. It was the natural reaction of people who had something to lose. But the fact is that Obregón was a practical man and an able politician. He had to have a strong party; he encouraged the radical CROM, but he created a check by allowing the peasants to organize under Díaz Soto y Gama. He kept state politicos in line by putting his own men in key positions. He did not make the mistake of Juárez, but rewarded the heroes of the Revolution by keeping them all on the payroll. The expense was enormous, but Obregón could not run the risk of "pronunciamientos." Perhaps he did not even want to get rid of the Revolutionary chieftains, for Obregón had a weakness for his old companions. Generals continued to be above the law, as they still are.

Obregón, for all his agrarian sympathies, was not eager to attack the complicated and dangerous problem of distributing the land on any Zapatista basis. Free villages (i. e., those not in haciendas) were given the right to apply for lands to the Agrarian Commission, but the initiative was left to the Indians, and the villagers, intimidated by hacendados and caudillos, or persuaded by their priests that expropriation was robbery, were modest in their demands. Moreover, the Indians had no capital with which to buy tools, seeds, and animals, and loan sharks collected exorbitant interest. Finally, a large part of the population was indifferent, if not actively hostile, to the government. It would take long years of education to teach the oppressed and illiterate mass of Indians to see good in any program emanating from Mexico City.

The labor movement had a better start. The CROM became a sort of militia of Obregón. Its chief, Morones, was one of the most powerful men in Mexico. He was czar of labor; he organized a gang of thugs known as the *palanca* (lever), by which he pried blackmail from unwilling employers, induced rival unions to join the CROM, or murdered people who got in his way. As the strength of the CROM increased under the protection of Obregón, its little bosses discovered that employers were willing to pay good cash to avoid strikes. Cash and corruption made the union caudillos as obnoxious as their military brethren, and their arrogance and rapacity made their destruction merely a matter of time. But, in spite of all the disgusting actions of its leaders, Mexican labor made real advances toward a more decent standard of living. The distressing part of it was that workers, seeing the cynical behavior of their leaders, became cynical themselves, and the labor movement came to mean in the minds of many a grab for power and easy money.

The most solid advance toward rebuilding Mexico according to the new blueprint was made in education. Obregón wisely chose a man who had no party affiliations, a scholar and writer, José Vasconcelos. Vasconcelos was not even a Revolutionary in the official sense. He had, indeed, nothing but contempt for the parvenu barbarians thrown up by the Revolution, but he did have an idea that the Mexican people would accept a new set of values, if given the chance.

Vasconcelos is one of the strangest figures of modern Mexico. He threw himself into the work of educating the Indians with the enthusiasm of a sixteenth-century missionary, and with something of their other-worldliness. The missionaries had taught the Indians to say their prayers in Latin; Vasconcelos would have them read the masterpieces of classical antiquity, and, in fact, spent a good part of his budget printing neat textbooks—for people who had never known a square meal. That odd vagary should not be given too much importance. Vasconcelos had an extraordinary gift; he could inspire young men and women to give their lives to the new religion of education. "Cultural missions," in mobile units, went from village to village; for the first time in their lives many thousands of men and women got some idea of the great world which lay beyond the next barranca. Movies, lectures, phonograph records, and pictures attempted to teach the Indians that Mexico was *their* country and that they were to take their place among responsible citizens. The Indians were encouraged to put up schoolhouses, and courageous young teachers buried themselves in the wilderness, with little equipment but mother wit, to bring the message of the new Fatherland to the dispossessed. Regardless of the lack of realism of parts of the program, and regardless of Vasconcelos' later abjuration of democracy, he must be given a high place among the men who are building Mexico.

Article 27 could not be swallowed by landowners and oil interests, and their cries of Bolshevism kept us from recognizing Obregón for three years. This did him no particular harm at the time, as it was proof that he was protecting Mexico from the foreigner, but elections were approaching, and Obregón did not care to provoke his opponents to a military revolt. So he became reasonable; Article 27 was declared not to be retroactive; foreign claims for damage incurred during the Revolution were allowed; payments on foreign debts were resumed; and Calvin Coolidge recognized Obregón as legal president of Mexico on August 23, 1923.

1923. Election year. The triumph of the Obregón System. It was marred only by the opposition of Adolfo de la

Huerta, who had been persuaded to run against Obregón's candidate, Calles, and who "pronounced" when the election turned out to be thoroughly rigged. He was supported by the usual crowd and by a number of revolutionary caudillos who thought they had been shabbily treated by Obregón. The revolt was short, but extremely violent. Obregón was saved by his superior military skill and by the loyalty of labor and the peasants. De la Huerta retired to Los Angeles to teach music again. One evil effect of the episode (besides the 60,000,000 pesos spent in the campaign) was the naming of fifty-four new generals to replace the ousted friends of de la Huerta. The Army always wins.

1924. Plutarco Elías Calles, a despot, usually benevolent, but always a despot. He ruled lawfully when it was convenient; otherwise his enemies "committed suicide." The Obregón System under his hands became perfect and powerful. Calles put the Army to work building roads and policing them afterward; he supported Vasconcelos' school system; he allowed the agrarian program to go forward, not too rapidly for safety, and some 8,000,000 acres of land were distributed to 1500 villages in four years.

Calles' strongest support came from organized labor, the CROM. Luis Morones was made Ministry of Industry, with power to settle strikes as he pleased. Morones' lieutenants, the *Grupo Acción*, built country houses and traveled about in fine cars, but the shiniest car of all was the bomb-proof limousine of the diamond-bedecked leader of Mexico's embattled workers, Luis G. Morones. *X* equals a bandit.

Calles had strong anti-clerical leanings; his more or less open war with the clergy came to a head in 1926, when he was attacked in the newspapers. He retaliated by deporting some two hundred-odd alien priests and nuns, by closing all the church schools, and by ordering priests to register with the civil authorities. The row followed much the same pattern as the clerical revolt against Juárez, but the method was different. The clergy struck! All services ceased on July 31, 1926. The Creoles and the pious majority were horrified. In Jalisco, Michoacán, and Colima the terrible *Cristero* rebellion broke out. *¡Viva Cristo Rey!* "Long live Christ the King!" Death to the heretics! In the priest-led tumultos, government schools were burned, teachers were murdered, and a train was blown up, killing a hundred passengers. The local caudillos, all Calles men, took the punishment of the rebels into their own hands. They rounded up many thousands of Indians and herded them into concentration camps, while soldiers burned the villages and stole everything in sight. The frightful suppression of the Cristeros brought new demands for intervention from the Catholics of this country, but cautious Calvin Coolidge reckoned it was none of our business.

Calles' troubles with the United States were made considerably worse by a new crisis with the landowners and oil companies. He had announced that the oil companies would have to exchange their old titles for fifty-year leases. The row blew over, thanks to the hasty publication by W. R. Hearst of some clumsy forgeries, which purported to prove that Calles had bought up a number of United States senators for a round million of dollars. The oil people lost a good deal of sympathy also when the noisiest of the interventionists, Albert B. Fall and Edward L. Doheny, got themselves into a mess with the Teapot Dome scandal. Even so, the crisis was not definitely over until we had an attack of common sense and sent Dwight Morrow on his good will mission in 1927. Morrow liked the Mexicans, and a good many of them liked him. He put himself out to be agreeable; he was openhanded in the grand manner; he and his wife renovated a fine old house in Cuernavaca and furnished it with *Mexican* handicrafts. To show his appreciation of the graceful old city, Morrow commissioned Diego Rivera to paint the magnificent fresco in the Palace of Cortés, now the Ayuntamiento.

The end of the Calles régime found Mexico at peace with the world. Capital was edging back into the country; roads were being opened, and one could travel over them in safety; a great many schools had been built, although the supply of teachers (at forty pesos a month) was inadequate; the railroads had been repaired; and the first waves of tourists were discovering Mexico, the Land of Romance. Under the protection of her modern benevolent despots, Mexico's latent artistic talent blossomed in an astonishing renaissance; the names of Rivera, Orozco, Goitia, Siqueiros, Mérida, Tamayo, Izquierdo, and a host of others made Mexico the Mecca of western painters. One of the most heartening signs of a new life was the extraordinary success of the children's art classes. The youngsters were given brushes and canvas and were allowed to paint whatever their fancy dictated. The charming work of the Mexican children awoke more real appreciation of Mexico in this country than all the suffocating propaganda of well-meaning secretaries in tourist bureaus. If, along with these advances, Mexico was sodden with corruption by labor racketeers, thieving generals, and venal judges—well, no one can altogether escape his heritage. Iturbide, Santa Anna, Díaz. But Juárez is also Mexico's heritage.

1927. Elections. Francisco Serrano and Arnulfo Gómez decided to have a go at the presidency. They owed their positions to Calles, but loyalties among the military were not expected to go beyond reason. They were very badly advised. Their act had hardly got past the talking stage when the swift hand of Calles overtook them. The crosses over the graves of Serrano's party may still be seen beside the highway between Mexico City and Cuernavaca. Gómez was shot in Vera Cruz.

For some reason no other candidate offered himself, and Obregón was "elected," according to the System. Obregón was a hard man and an ambitious man, but he had the toughness which the times demanded, and it was a disaster for Mexico when he was shot by a religious fanatic on July 17, 1928. A great deal of ugly talk circulated about the "responsible" author of the crime. Obregón was bitterly hated by Morones, and it was also discreetly whispered that his death relieved Calles, who was not pleased at the prospect of giving up his power. Calles, however, rose to the occasion and announced that there would be no more caudillos in the presidency. Certainly not! He also made a magnificent grandstand play by marching, bareheaded and unescorted, in Obregón's funeral. Santa Anna could have done no better.

Chapter XXIV

TWELVE YEARS

1928. Calles' statement about the end of caudillo government was, of course, so much eyewash. The interim president, Emilio Portes Gil, was imposed by Calles. Calles men filled all the key positions in the Army and the state governments. A new capitalism had come into being during the past eight years—generals, state bosses, and labor racketeers. Their money was invested in land and Mexican industry, and now these Revolutionary plutocrats found themselves in the same boat with their ancient enemies, the old hacendado-clergy-foreigner complex of Don Porfirio's day. Calles, like Díaz, was the policeman of the new order, and he was also its principal beneficiary.

The new set of millionaires, with their riches acquired in the service of the Fatherland, had the psychology of the silver aristocracy of colonial times, without their piety. They put up palaces in Cuernavaca and the Lomas de Chapultepec which advertised to the world the wealth of their owners. Medieval castles, Gothic cathedrals, Hollywood bungalows, acres of stained glass, tennis courts, swimming pools, imported statuary, stables and garages, left no doubt about it. The heroes of the Revolution discovered that it was pleasant to wear imported clothes, ride in Cadillacs, and consort with honest-to-goodness millionaires from the States.

Calles and his satellites were above the law. One day I was almost run down by a fancy car that was traveling through the crowded streets of the capital at about forty miles an hour. I was badly scared and my language was appropriate. A cop grinned at me. "Think nothing of it," he said; "he missed you, didn't he?" I had to admit it. "The next time you see a general's car coming," he added, "get out of the way." "But," I protested, "how am I to know a general's car from any other?" "*You just learn to smell them,*" was the cryptic answer.

The discreet comments of minor bureaucrats and ordinary citizens about the parade of arrogance and vulgarity of the official set were unprintable, but the perfumed rivers of flattery which Calles soaked up made the efforts of former claques seem amateurish. The machine of Calles-Portes Gil was now the National Revolutionary Party, supported by a huge war chest, kept filled, on the CROM system, by taking a percentage of the salaries of all government employees, except the Army. The CROM itself, however, was out. It had served its purpose and now had become a hindrance to Mexico's new capitalists.

1929. Election year. Elections were controlled by the PNR and had become as dismal a farce as they had been under Don Porfirio. One wonders why they were held at all. Calles and his PNR nominated Pascual Ortiz Rubio, familiarly known as Don Pascualito, or, by the scalding Mexican humorists, as Don Nopalitos—from the thick, green leaves of the prickly pear. An abortive "pronunciamiento" was easily suppressed by Calles, but the independent candidacy of José Vasconcelos was another matter. The bitter philosopher toured the country and spoke to great throngs of disillusioned revolutionaries and eager Catholics. Calles' answer was to send truckloads of gunmen to Vasconcelos meetings to spray them with machinegun bullets. Vasconceles fled the country to talk the arms off the American public, and Ortiz Rubio was elected by a handsome majority.

Calles' country home in Cuernavaca, on "the Street of the Forty Thieves," as the humorists had it, was now the capital of Mexico. The unhappy Ortiz Rubio ran the government as best he could, with one ear glued to the telephone. The grateful PNR gave Calles the title of *Jefe Máximo de la Revolución*, "Supreme Chief of the Revolution," and when he spoke, no dog barked.

1930. Calles went to Europe and came back with a brand-new message; he had discovered that small peasant proprietorship, as practiced in France, was a failure. Therefore, the distribution of land to Indian families was a mistake, the obvious remedy being to encourage large plantations. Calles had become a great landlord. By 1933 the distribution of land to the Indians had almost ceased. The Jefe Máximo continued to sabotage the CROM by encouraging independent unions and by keeping the labor caudillos away from the trough. Membership in the CROM dropped in a few years from a claimed million or more to a very small fraction of that figure. Its leaders drifted away to more profitable fields—all but Morones, who managed to keep his Cadillac and his diamonds.

At the same time Calles made overtures to the Church. After all, Religion and the Strong Hand had always got along nicely together. But his caudillos did not lose their prejudices so easily. A genuine persecution took place in 1931 and 1932. The Constitution of 1917 allowed the states to limit the ratio of priests to one per hundred thousand of the population. The caudillos took to applying the law, for no well-explained reason, and in a year or so there was only a handful of priests left in the entire Republic. The expulsion was accompanied by the usual Indian riots and reprisals by state troops. The noise of battle became so loud by 1932 that Ortiz Rubio could no longer make himself heard, and Calles announced that the president had resigned. It is interesting to note that Ortiz Rubio sent his resignation to Cuernavaca rather than to the Congress. That body had sunk to the status of Díaz' *caballada*.

1932. The next *pelele*, or front man for Calles, was the wealthy gambling-house owner and business partner of

Calles, Abelardo Rodríguez, "the friend of the proletariat." His régime was marked by the appearance of gangs of toughs who called themselves the "Gold Shirts," and whose function was to beat up Communists (read opponents of Calles, some of whom were Communists) and Jews. These thugs were a recrudescence of the *bravi* of Díaz, the *porra* of Gustavo Madero, and the *palanca* of Morones. Official Mexico was going fascist.

1933. Calles' betrayal of the Revolution was met by counter activity on the part of labor groups and agrarians. They were strong enough to capture a considerable block of Calles' own PNR, and they pushed through a measure to resume the distribution of land. To rescue the villages from local caciques, the administration of land was put in the central government. A new bank was established to finance the ejidos. A young instructor of philosophy at the University, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, began the reorganization of labor which was to result in a new orientation of Mexican workers and peasants.

Another power in the anti-Calles movement within the PNR was the Minister of Education, Narciso Bassols, who began the program of "socialized education," to emancipate Mexican youth from clerical control by teaching the "scientific truth" in the public schools. The clergy and the pious were extremely bitter about this "atheistic" education, and still are. In a marketplace of Michoacán I overheard two Indian women talking. First woman: "Sister, they say that we shall have to send our children to the atheist schools. What are we going to do?" Second woman: "You may do what you like, but as for me, they can kill me if they wish, but I will not send my boy to be taught mortal sin. Better death than that!"

Conversation with a bishop. I: "Do you mind telling me how they are taking the new educational program in your diocese?" Bishop: "I really have nothing to say about it." I: "But surely you can tell me something about it. People have been talking about nothing else ever since I came to this town. How do your teachers go about it?" Bishop: "My son, you are evidently new in these parts. How should the teachers know what is expected of them? You see, this is *Mexican* socialism, which means that whatever it is today, tomorrow it will be something else. So it is quite idle to try to find out what it is."

1934. End of the six-year presidential term, filled by three *peleles* of Calles. The Jefe Máximo had to find a new president. The growing radical group in the PNR was getting dangerously restless and would have to be appeased. The depression had knocked the props from under laissez-faire liberalism; "plans" were in the air; even the United States had its New Deal. So the PNR got up a "Six Year Plan" to put the Revolution on its feet—to carry through the agrarian program (again), to protect the rights of labor, to vanquish illiteracy, to make Mexico economically independent. General Lázaro Cárdenas was chosen as the party candidate. A couple of independents were allowed to run, but Cárdenas was elected by the expected overwhelming majority.

The Jefe Máximo had made a bad mistake. The mild-spoken man from Michoacán really believed that the Six Year Plan was good and that it could be made to work. Not only that; he turned out to have as keen a nose for politics as the Jefe himself. He knew from the beginning that the first obstacle in the way of any reform was Calles and the whole corrupt set of military and political millionaires who had wrecked the Revolution. Cárdenas had the shrewd instinct of Benito Juárez; he knew the people were with him, and he went to them with his Six Year Plan.

Cárdenas was actually campaigning against the Jefe Máximo himself. He did not discourage strikes; he suppressed the gambling houses by which some of the Jefe's friends made their fortunes; he threw out the Calles cabinet and put in one of his own; he even courted favor among the Catholics by offering them protection from the barbarous state caudillos. On the other hand, he showed the new plutocrats that he could be broad-minded, by including the most notorious of them, General Saturnino Cedillo, in his cabinet—possibly, also, because he wanted to keep an eye on him. By using the Jefe's own technique, in two years Cárdenas was ready for a showdown. Revolution was in the air, but for some reason it did not materialize, and one day the Jefe Máximo de la Revolución and his chief strong-arm man, Luis G. Morones, found themselves unceremoniously dumped across the border. Calles was reading *Mein Kampf*. The ousting of Calles was the most spectacular piece of political engineering that Mexico had ever seen, and it was thoroughly enjoyed.

1936. For four years the young master was free to devote himself to an honest (on his part) and not unsuccessful effort to make his Six Year Plan work. He took over the PNR, purged it of *Callistas*, and eventually renamed it the PRM, the Party of the Mexican Revolution. He boldly drove a wedge into the Army by giving the enlisted men an increase in wages, so that "Juan Soldado" might look to the president as his *patrón*. He continued the Obregón tactic of encouraging bodies of militia among the unions and agrarians, being always careful to see that they remained balanced.

Cárdenas distributed more land to the peasants in six years than had been distributed in all the years since the Revolution. At the same time he recognized that distribution in small parcels had not been successful. Up in the Laguna district of Durango and Chihuahua a cotton strike gave Cárdenas the opportunity to condemn some 600,000 acres of rich land, upon which he began the famous Laguna co-operative project. He settled 30,000 families in the Laguna, organized in a multitude of interlocking units. The project required large scale financing, and a new bank was organized, the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal, with a capital of 30,000,000 pesos. It was benevolent despotism with imagination.

Bank's report for 1936: "In the Laguna region credits were granted to 29,690 peasant family heads organized in ejidos, for the cultivation of over 247,000 acres. The total of these loans was 8,124,692 pesos, guaranteed by crops estimated at over 50,000,000 pesos."

January, 1937: "During the last week in January investment by the National Bank of Ejidal Credit in the Laguna region reached a new weekly high of over a million pesos. The exact sum was 1,121,025 pesos, the largest part of which is to be used in purchasing cotton seed. . . ."

The obvious danger in such a program was that the peasant might become a serf of the bank, as critics pointed out. I have not heard any concrete complaints from the Laguna project, but a sugar man from Los Mochis, Sinaloa, made some pertinent observations on the new system, from the manufacturers' point of view. "The sugar people at Los Mochis are sitting pretty with the ejido system. Once upon a time they had all the bother of payrolls, labor disputes, medical care, housing, and the general responsibility for field hands. Now they are rid of all that. The whole business is reduced to a matter of bookkeeping, and the bank holds the bag."

I do not know how the peasants of Los Mochis like the new set-up. It is probably good for them. They cannot lay off whenever they wish without incurring the displeasure of their community, which is not likely to be tolerant of slackness when the ejido has to pay for it. They cannot strike. What? Strike against themselves? Apparently they have to work as hard as ever, and possibly harder, and their boss is the distant and impersonal bank. It is unlikely that the bank, operating through a bureaucracy of its own, will prove a more humane taskmaster than the old hacendado, whom one could at least argue with, or take a shot at, as the occasion demanded. It seems to me that the bank is caught in the same dilemma as the ancient encomendero; it has to make a living with Indian labor, but it must not use coercion. The bank becomes, in fact, the administrator of a huge estate, and it must make good. It has to make enough money, at least, to cover overhead expenses and replace its capital. Sugarcane can be sold at a profit, if the market allows it; but cheap production requires cheap labor, and so the bank must drive a hard bargain, or close up. The ejidatario of Los Mochis is not paid wages but receives a share of the proceeds from the sale of cane, after the bank has deducted interest, carrying charges, and capital payments. In the end the ejidatario's income depends upon the world price of sugar. The peasant may feel better about "working for himself," and the responsibility is unquestionably good for him, but it is doubtful that in this case he can ever "go into the black."

The most powerful support of the Cárdenas régime came from the new and militant *Confederación de Trabajadores de México*, the CTM, organized in 1936 by Vicente Lombardo Toledano. It became, in fact, a working class militia, and, with the backing of Cárdenas, reached into every field of activity, from the federal white collar workers and schoolteachers, to the boys who snatched one's luggage away, willy-nilly, at the railroad stations. The military discipline of the CTM brought along with it the ancient curse of caudillismo, and pistol-toting organizers and *líderes* (leaders) became an unmitigated nuisance. It was as hard to convict a *líder* of a crime as it was to convict a general. And yet, in spite of its hereditary incubus of santanismo, Mexican labor made real gains. Its twenty years of betrayal and sell-outs had been an education the hard way, but an education, and it is not likely that future caudillos will meet with a passive acceptance of treachery.

The civil war in Spain found Cárdenas and the vigorous CTM firmly behind the Spanish Republican government, while the rest of the democratic world seemed to be doing its best to insure the victory of General Franco's weird assortment of Italians, Moors, Germans, Carlists, and Falangistas. Cárdenas had a clearer vision of the essentials of the conflict than our own government, which at the time was supporting the appeasers. The arrival of five hundred refugee Spanish children at Vera Cruz in 1937 was one of the most moving spectacles in the history of the generous Mexican people. Cárdenas was also the first to seize the opportunity of inviting an unlimited number of Spanish Republicans to Mexico after the war, recognizing the great value to Mexican economy in those hardy peasants and mechanics. He did the same thing for the homeless intellectuals of Spain, and Mexico was enriched by a sizeable group of scholars, scientists, writers, and artists.

Cárdenas was condemned as a Red; he was polluting holy Mexico with the atheistic scum who had been run out of Spain by that paladin, Francisco Franco. Shirt organizations, German and Spanish, joined the traditional conservative elements of Mexico in fighting the whole Cárdenas program. They were soon reinforced by the most formidable enemy that Cárdenas had challenged, the oil companies.

A strike of refinery and field workers had dragged on for two years, with each side making charges and claims so essentially opposed that compromise was out of the question. A Supreme Court decision favored the workers; the companies said they could not obey it; and they were declared to be in a "state of rebellion." On March 18, 1938, President Cárdenas signed his famous order expropriating the oil properties.

An immense amount of literature has been circulated by both sides of the oil dispute, with such epithets as "Communist" and "imperialist" being freely exchanged. To the oil workers, who were saturated with the Boxer heritage of the Revolution, the expropriation was the emancipation of Mexico. A monster mass meeting was organized by

Lombardo Toledano on March 23, 1938, to celebrate Mexico's new independence. The *Mexican Labor News* became lyrical.

"At nine o'clock in the morning the demonstrators began their march toward the central Zócalo, and the last contingents had not passed by the main balcony of the Palace, where President Cárdenas, together with several members of his Administration, reviewed the parade, until four in the afternoon. At the height of the demonstration the tremendous square was solidly packed with a mass of wildly cheering humanity celebrating the dawn of what thousands of placards and standards hailed as the economic independence of Mexico."

March 18 became a national holiday. Two years after the expropriation I watched the slightly stereotyped demonstration in the Zócalo. Mexico had been through a lot of trouble with her new baby, but I could not help admiring the spirit, somewhat dampened, of the crowd. The faithful *Mexican Labor News* of March 21, 1940, did its part. "All over the country, in cities and towns and villages, workers, peasants, soldiers, and all of the people paraded through the streets with cheers and music and banners that proclaimed: 'The Wealth of Mexico Must Be Possessed by Mexico!' In Mexico City over a hundred thousand men, women and children crowded into the great Plaza of the Constitution.... Flags were hung from the Palace windows, and flags and enormous pictures of Cárdenas and Camacho ... were hung from the Cathedral towers. Bells rang; the uniformed drum and bugle corps of the CTM workers played the marches of the Mexican Revolution; and when the Plaza was full to overflowing, the thousands there began to sing the National Anthem, with all the strength of their voices. This was Mexico's reiteration of her declaration of independence from foreign imperialism."

All this was very moving and patriotic, but it was poor statesmanship, in my opinion, for the Mexican government had made no preparations for carrying on an economic war. Moreover, during the depression, taxes from oil and the silver-buying policy of the New Deal were two certain sources of desperately needed income. Mexico had not developed a technical staff capable of handling the complicated problems of production and distribution efficiently. She also had to saddle herself with an enormous but undetermined debt to pay for the properties. The cutting off of income meant an immediate drop in the exchange value of the peso, and, since a great many manufactured articles and a considerable amount of prime necessities came from abroad, the cost of living began to soar. Strikes and threats of strikes, protesting against the increased prices, kept the country in a turmoil, and poverty struck hard.

In the workers' administrations of the oil industry and the railroads, the Utopians received another shock. They discovered that the unions were just as anxious to make money at the public expense as the corporations had been and were less easily controlled. The number of employees on the payroll steadily increased, despite lowering demands. Overhead charges tended to eat up what little profit could be made in a restricted market. The workers' administration of the railroads was so bad that it approached the disastrous. The excuse was that the lines were worn out, that there was insufficient working capital, that the rolling stock was falling to pieces—all of which was true. But things got steadily worse, and wrecks became so frequent that the public was alarmed. Mexican humorists got to work on the situation and circulated the story that one frightful wreck near Zacatecas was caused by the habit of the engineers and firemen of playing poker during runs. The story was indignantly denied. The disease of the railroads was apparent in the irresponsibility of the train crews. Trains swarmed with men, but the service had never been worse. The emancipated workers seemed to have caught the manners of their caudillos and treated the public with indifference.

The trouble with the theory of workers' administrations, it seems to me, was its assumption that if the men were given the responsibility of running their own business they would somehow acquire pride and public spirit. But that would take a training which the men had never had. Meanwhile, the workers' administrations too frequently ran their businesses with an eye on immediate returns. By the end of 1940 President Cárdenas was already threatening to take over the railroads and the oil industry if the workers did not behave themselves.

"Independence from foreign imperialism" is a soul-satisfying slogan, but I do not know just what it means. As long as Mexico needs goods and food from abroad, and as long as she must exchange her own products for such imports, complete independence is impossible—just as it is impossible for all the rest of us. She can, indeed, exercise control over foreign *and native* imperialism, but expropriation and workers' administrations will not solve the matter.

1940. The presidential campaign in 1940 was one of the most extraordinary ever seen in Mexico. President Cárdenas announced a free election, and he probably meant it. He allowed the opposition complete freedom of criticism, in which all the sins of the ruling machine were pitilessly exposed and a great deal of mud was slung. General Juan Andreu Almazán, who had become many times a millionaire through government road contracts and other means peculiar to generals, toured the country in a vigorous campaign against the "Reds," the atheists, the schools, the Spanish refugees, and a good many real abuses of the Cárdenas régime. Foreign and Mexican capital, the clergy, the Creoles, the fascists, unorganized labor, and unregenerate peasants listened and believed. There was unquestionably a very heavy support of Almazán throughout the country, in spite of his lack of a constructive program. During the heat of the battle I traveled through Jalisco, Michoacán, Mexico, Puebla, Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, and everywhere I saw demonstrations and heard open talk of revolution. The campaign surpassed in bitterness anything I had yet seen. On the other side there was not much talking, although the usual organized demonstrations paraded about the capital. There was no enthusiasm for Manuel Avila Camacho, even among his official supporters. He was dubbed "the unknown soldier," with considerable truth. But the efficient state machine functioned quietly. Local caudillos could be counted on to protect their jobs; bureaucrats the same. There was a good deal of sporadic assassination of Almazanistas, and the assailants were never punished. The "free" election went the way of its predecessors; Almazán, 100,000-odd votes; Avila Camacho, 2,000,000-odd.

Shrieks of fraud. Almazán made a spectacular flight to the United States, although his life was not threatened. It looked like a bid for support of the coming revolution against the "Red" government of Cárdenas. Meanwhile, however, the second World War had taken a serious turn; our State Department suddenly and belatedly awoke to the fascist threat to America; and the Cárdenas government became respectable. Almazán was quietly discouraged and, just as quietly, went home to face charges of "betrayal" flung at him by his disillusioned supporters.

Meanwhile, the people's choice gave promise of being reasonable. He went to Mass; he piped down the radicals in the PRM and CTM; Lombardo Toledano was induced to resign; the oil people were promised a speedy settlement of the expropriation business. Avila Camacho has none of the background that gave Cárdenas his bent toward agrarian reform. He is one of the new class of Mexican capitalists; his brother is the political boss of the state of Puebla and a very wealthy man. Avila Camacho is an affable, polo-playing Army officer, and may be expected to have the prejudices of his class. The Army should come into its own. In January, 1941, President Avila Camacho distributed a bale of new swords to his officers. "The Army," he said, "is the bulwark of Mexican liberties."

Does this mean that all the real progress made under Cárdenas will be scrapped? I do not believe so. The agrarian and labor movements are far too well organized to permit it. But I do think that there will be a less rigid interpretation of the laws of expropriation; that the distribution of land to the peasants will continue, but *diminuendo*. Labor unions and workers' administrations are already being given notice that the good old days are gone; a new railroad administration is being set up, under government control; a similar development may be expected in oil and other expropriated industries. The "Second Six Year Plan," although buried under a fearful lot of verbiage, promises a continuation of Cárdenas' policies. I should expect the Avila Camacho régime to incline to the right as far as it dared, but not to provoke an agrarian and labor revolt in the PRM.

Meanwhile, the new administration is pretty well tied up with our defense program; Mexican oil and minerals will be in demand, and they must be kept out of unfriendly hands. Avila Camacho has already announced his intention of cooperating in "hemisphere defense." In January, 1941, the Mexican Congress passed a conscription bill and reaffirmed Cárdenas' policy of aiding the democracies against fascism. The noisy fascist organizations were given notice that they were out of order, and their mouthpiece was deported. The United States and President Avila Camacho are going to get along very nicely together, and the boys are climbing on the bandwagon.

* * *

As I read over what I have written, I am oppressed, as every commentator on Mexico must be oppressed, by the impossibility of reaching a conclusion. Many Mexicos are still many Mexicos. The vast programs of social and economic reform are still aspirations in the main. Upon traveling about the country one is struck with the primitiveness and stark poverty of endless stretches, and only here and there a bright new schoolhouse or a group of ejido buildings testifies to the efforts of Cárdenas and some of his predecessors to regenerate their country, while the opponents of change are honestly convinced that such efforts are either quixotic or wicked. The ejido and the schoolhouse must be "Mexico's way out," in the late Eyler Simpson's phrase, unless we are willing to accept fascist philosophy and condemn the great mass of mankind to perpetual slavery. But the way out has only begun, and no one knows where it leads.

Meanwhile, Mexico remains a military oligarchy, and the Army sucks up a fourth of the government's income. Soldiers are everywhere, and their only conceivable function is to hold down the restless populace, afflicted by hunger and choked by a prodigious birth rate, and ready to follow any impassioned orator who promises to lead them out of the wilderness.

Mother Mexico is not feeding her children.

GLOSSARY

Afrancesado. Term of ridicule applied in the eighteenth century to Spaniards who aped French manners, or who advocated the introduction of French reforms.

Agiotista. Loan shark of Mexico who lent money to the government, usually at exorbitant rates of interest.

Alcalde. Mayor of a town; there might be several, depending upon the size of the town.

Alcalde Mayor. Royal governor of a province (*alcaldía mayor*).

Alguacil. Constable.

Alguacil Mayor. Chief constable of a community or province.

Alhóndiga. Public granary.

Area. Common village threshing floor.

Arriero. Driver of a pack-train.

Audiencia. Supreme Court of New Spain; it also had executive functions.

Auto de fe. Public ceremony of the Inquisition in which the sentences of the accused were read.

Barranca. Gully or canyon.

Barrio. Division of a community; ward.

Caballería. Town lot and corresponding land granted to a horse-soldier.

Cabecera. Head town of a province.

Cabildo. Town council; cathedral chapter.

Cacique. Indian chieftain; later applied to any local boss.

Caciquismo. Bossism.

Casa. House.
Casa de Moneda. Mint.
Caudillo. Military chieftain.
Chirimía. High-pitched Moorish reed flute.
Cimarrón. Term applied to runaway Negro slaves who formed colonies in the wilderness and lived by brigandage.
Cofradía. Fraternity of workers, usually grouped in trades, who took charge of church festivals.
Comunidad. Municipal corporation.
Congregación. Act of congregating; also a village formed by bringing smaller units together.
Contador. Accountant.
Corregidor. Royal governor of a province (*corregimiento*); corresponds to *alcalde mayor.*
Cortes. Parliament.
Costumbre. Custom; native law.

Despacho. Office; place of business.
Doctrina. Mission school.

Ejido. Plot of land reserved for communal use; originally intended for a grazing ground, it was later applied to the common agricultural land of an Indian village.
Estancia. Cattle farm.

Faenero. Miner who does piece-work.
Fanega. Dry measure; a hundredweight.
Frijol. Bean.
Fuero. Special laws by which the Church (later the Army also) reserved jurisdiction over all its officers; ecclesiastical and military immunity from civil jurisdiction.

Gachupín. Term of ridicule applied to Spaniards.
Gringo. Ditto applied to Americans.
Guacamole. A paste made of the meat of the *aguacate* (avocado), mixed with onion and green pepper.

Guerrilla. Irregular warfare; "guerrilla" war.
Guerrillero. Irregular soldier.

Hacienda. Term applied in Mexico to a large landed estate.
Hermandad. A union of Spanish cities; brotherhood.
Hidalgo. Nobleman.

Juez repartidor. Officer in charge of distributing Indian labor.
Juez visitador. Official visitor; examiner.
Junta. Committee; usually applied to revolutionary committees.

Latifundismo. Institution of holding land in large estates.
Lépero. Leper; applied to beggars and vagabonds of cities.
Ley. Law.
Liberalito. Term of ridicule applied to anti-clerical party.
Lunero. Term applied to Indians working on weekly shifts in Yucatan.

Macehual. Aztec term for peasant.
Machete. Large knife carried by Mexican peasant.
Maestro. Master workman; now applied to virtually all workmen above a certain age; also, teacher.
Maguey. The century plant, used for making pulque and fiber.
Malpaís. Country covered with lava or scoria.
Mandón. Indian officer charged with rounding up repartimientos (q. v.).
Maravedí. Ancient Spanish coin, 450 to the gold peso.
Masa. Dough made of cornmeal.
Milpa. Plot of land usually planted in maize.
Mita. (See *repartimiento*).
Moderado. Moderate; belonging to the Moderate Party.
Monte. Wild country; woods reserved for fuel supply of a community.

Obraje. Textile manufactory.
Oidor. Judge of the Audiencia.

Palanca. Lever; name applied to Morones' gang of thugs.

Patria. Fatherland; also, one's native town or province.

Patrón. Boss; the Big Boss.

Patronazgo (Real Patronazgo; also, Real Patronato). Right of Spanish monarchs to make nominations for ecclesiastical appointments.

Peñol. A precipitous hill; a fortified hill.

Peón. Foot-soldier; laborer.

Peonería. Land and town lot granted to a foot-soldier.

Petaca. Trunk or any piece of luggage.

Porra. Mace; applied to Gustavo Madero's gang of thugs.

Posada. Inn.

Probanza. Affidavit of services rendered.

Procurador. Attorney.

Pueblo. Town, together with its land.

Pueblo de visita. Town too small to support a priest, visited periodically.

Pulque. Liquor made of sap of the maguey.

Pureza de sangre. Purity of blood; absence of Moorish, Negro, or Jewish blood—required of nobles.

Puro. Pure; term of ridicule applied to jacobins and violent anti-clerical elements.

Quemadero. Burning-place; the quemadero of Mexico was at the east end of the Alameda, near the present Palace of Fine Arts.

Ranchería. Cluster of Indian houses, too small for organization.

Real de Minas. Mining camp (from *real*, a military encampment).

Reboso (or rebozo). Shawl.

Recua. Train of mules or other pack-animals.

Regidor. Councilman.

Repartimiento. Allotment of Indian labor made for specified tasks; same as *mita*.

RESIDENCIA. Trial of public officer held after he left office.
RURAL. Member of Díaz' state police.

SANTO. Saint; among the Indians the image of the local patron saint.

TAMEME. Aztec term for carrier.
TENATERO. In the absence of hoisting machinery, the man who carried ore to the surface in a leather bag (*tenate*).
TEOCENTLI. Aztec term for maize, "holy grain."
TORTILLA. Flat cake made of cornmeal, baked dry on a griddle (*comal*).
TUMULTO. Riot; tumult.

VECINO. Citizen of a community; usually restricted to whites in colonial times.
VILLA. A small city.
VISITADOR. Visitor; examiner.

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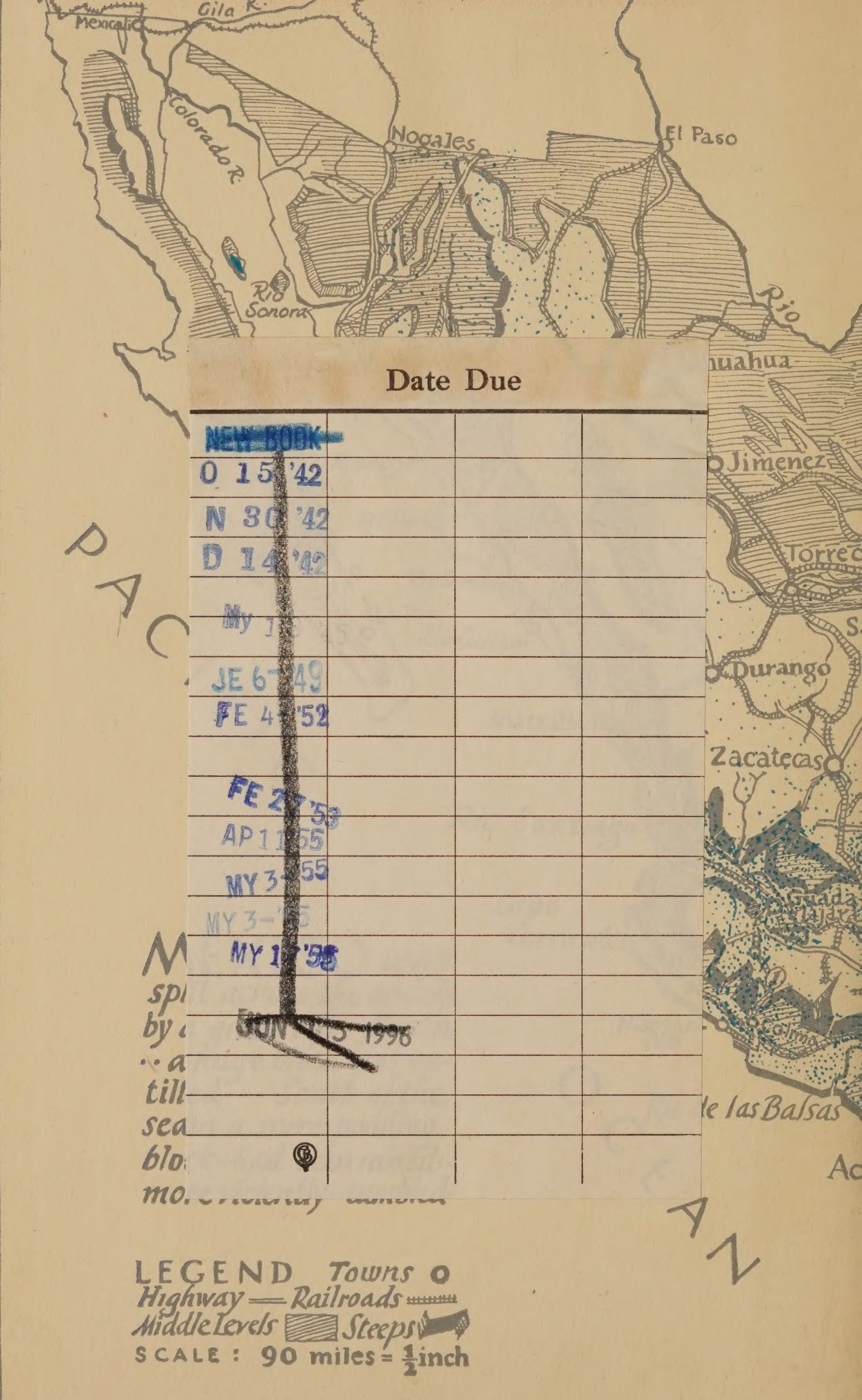
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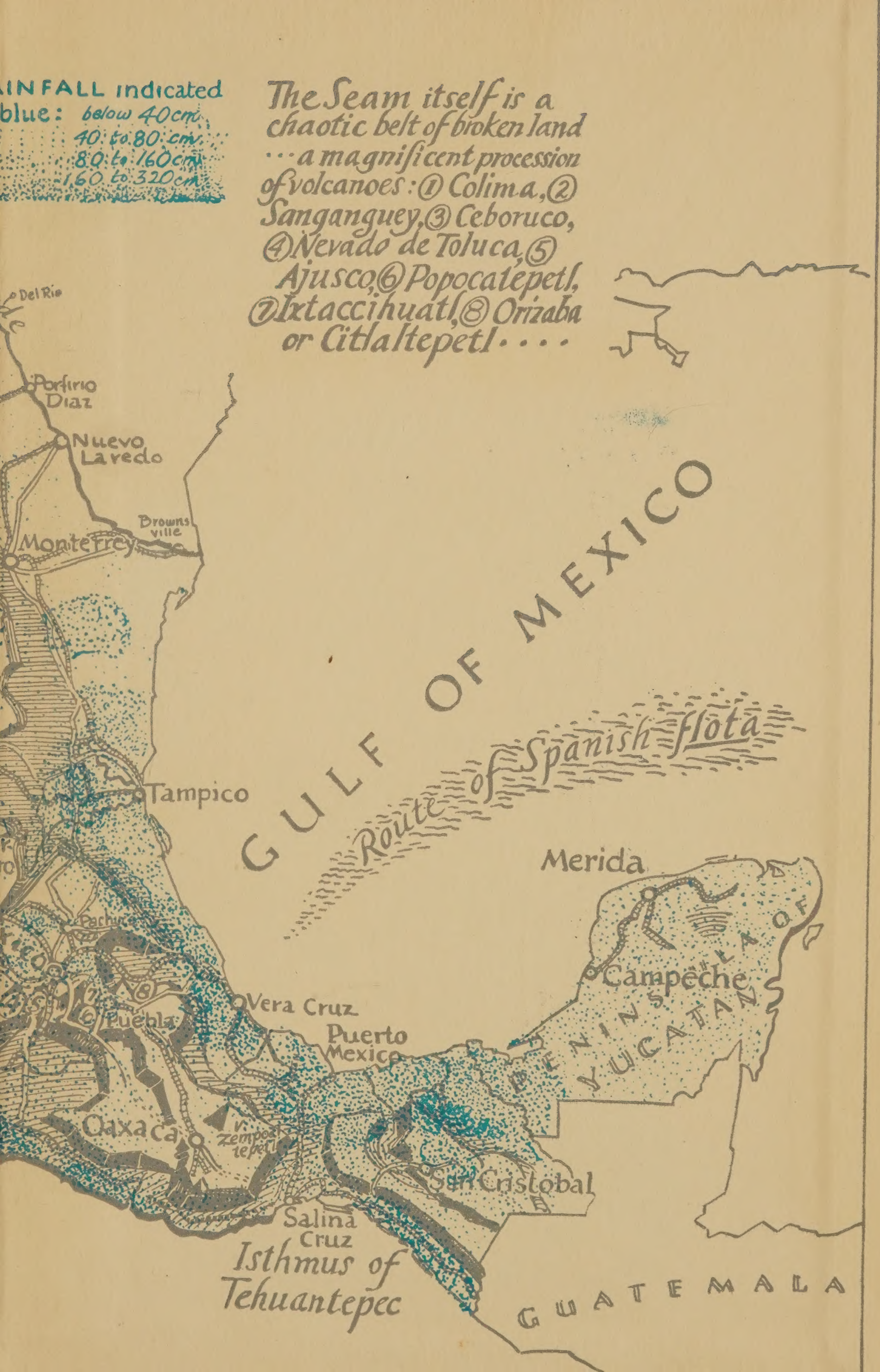

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